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Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

Effects of Direct Focused and Indirect Focused Feedback on Sentence Fragments, Noun-pronoun Agreement, and Run-on Sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at Universidad de Cuenca

Trabajo de titulación previo a la obtención del título de Magíster en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo de investigación cuasi-experimental estudia los efectos de la retroalimentación enfocada directa e indirecta en errores gramaticales relacionados a oraciones seguidas sin puntuación, concordancia sustantivo-pronombre, y oraciones fragmentos en escritos de estudiantes nivel A2 de la Universidad de Cuenca durante el semestre octubre 2018 – enero 2019. El estudio se enmarca dentro de la teoría Hipótesis del Output Comprensible establecida por Swain en el año 1985. La muestra utilizada fue de 58 participantes (hombres=28; mujeres=30) asignados a dos grupos de tratamiento y un grupo de control. El tratamiento involucró 6 tareas escritas; mismas que recibieron retroalimentación de tipo enfocada-directa en el primer grupo de tratamiento (n=20), y de tipo enfocada-indirecta en el segundo grupo de tratamiento (n=19) en los errores gramaticales mencionados anteriormente. El grupo de control (n=19) no recibió retroalimentación. Para la medición de los efectos de los tipos de retroalimentación y la falta de los mismos, se tomó el primer y último escrito como prueba preliminar y posterior respectivamente. Pruebas no paramétricas, debido a la distribución no normal de los datos, fueron aplicadas, y se encontró que las dos técnicas de retroalimentación tuvieron un impacto positivo y significativo en la corrección de errores de oraciones seguidas sin puntuación y fragmentos. Después de comparar y analizar los resultados de las dos técnicas de retroalimentación, se encontró que dichas técnicas produjeron efectos positivos similares en los dos tipos de errores anteriores. Finalmente, se reporta que el grupo de control no presentó cambios significativos.

Palabras clave: Retroalimentación escrita. Enfocada-directa. Enfocada-indirecta. Oraciones seguidas sin puntuación. Oraciones fragmentos. Concordancia del sustantivo-pronombre.

ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental study reports the effects of Direct Focused and Indirect Focused Feedback on Sentence Fragments, Noun-pronoun Agreement, and Run-on Sentences in Writing Tasks of A2 EFL Students at Universidad de Cuenca during the period of October 2018 – January 2019. The study was framed by Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985). The sample employed was comprised of 58 participants (male=28; female=30) who were assigned to two treatment groups and one control group. The first treatment group (n=20) received direct focused feedback, and the second treatment group (n=19) received indirect focused feedback on the aforementioned grammatical errors. The control group (n=19) did not receive feedback. The two feedback strategies were applied on six different writing tasks during the treatment, and the first and last task were employed as the pre- and post-test, respectively. As the data were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests were applied to measure the effects of the two feedback techniques. The statistical analysis indicated that both feedback types produced significant changes in terms of run-on sentences and sentence fragments; though, there were no significant changes in terms of noun-pronoun agreement. Moreover, after comparing the statistical results of both feedback strategies, it was found that direct and indirect focused feedback had equally significant effects. Finally, the control group did not present any changes in the grammatical targets.

Keywords: Written corrective feedback. Direct focused. Indirect focused. Run-on sentences. Sentence fragments. Noun-pronoun agreement.

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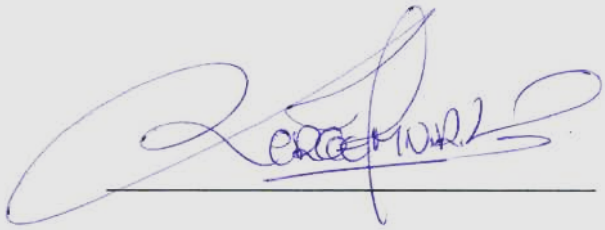

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Thanks God for all your blessings.

DEDICATION

To Jaime and Ruth, who have endowed me with all the values and perseverance to continue this path called life.

Para Jaime y Ruth, mis padres, quienes me han enseñado los valores de la humildad y la perseverancia para recorrer este camino llamado vida.

1. Introduction

This chapter presents the study's focus, problem statement, research questions, and significance.

1.1. Introduction

Acquisition, of either a first or second language, is not an error-free process of learning; on the contrary, errors are inevitable and may emerge not only in speaking but also in writing since they can be of phonological, morphological, lexical, or syntactic nature (Touchie, 1986).

In writing, a common concern in its teaching-learning process stems from the usage of grammar since grammatical errors may be one reason to cause communication failure (Sermsook, Liamnimitr & Pockakorn, 2017). This problem with communication due to cohesion issues becomes even more evident in second language (L2) acquisition since L2 writing is certainly more challenging (Jodaie & Farrokhi, 2012) and intimidating as creating a written piece requires background information on a topic, organizational skills, mastery of grammar and punctuation, and accurate word choices (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016a). Consequently, if a learner does not meet any aforementioned writing requirement, communication failure may result. Sermsook et al. (2017) exemplify communication failure in L2 writing, due to a syntactic error, as follows: *She name is Mook* meaning *Her name is Mook*. Grammatical inaccuracies, hence, can cause difficulty in understanding a message.

In order to help students improve their grammatical accuracy and avoid communication failure in L2 writing, teachers commonly react to errors through the provision of Written Corrective Feedback (Ferris, 2010) and employ different feedback strategies, such as direct, metalinguistic, indirect, reformulation, and electronic feedback (Ellis, 2008). Ferris (2010) state that Written Corrective Feedback (henceforth WCF) provision is seen as an educational tool which leads students to the correction of their grammatical errors and hence improve their writing skills. Nonetheless, although WCF has been found to be beneficial in writing (Alhumidi & Yantnadu, 2016; Atmaca, 2016; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Martínez, 2015; Norouzian &

Khomeijani, 2012), findings from studies have not, yet, been conclusive as to which feedback strategy works best. Therefore, it has become a need to conduct more studies on feedback strategies in the field of L2 Writing (Kassim & Ng, 2014; Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017; Westmacott, 2017) to gain more insights.

1.2. Problem Statement

Writing is a complex skill to develop (Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017), and this complexity is reflected in students' frequent struggle to accurately apply grammar rules in compositions (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). In fact, problems with grammar in writing tasks of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at University of Cuenca were acknowledged by 22 teachers at the Institute of Languages of the university in a Likert-type survey on frequent grammatical errors (further details in section 4.3). Specifically, the survey showed that sentence fragments, run-ons, and noun-pronoun agreement errors were regularly made. Additionally, the results of the survey revealed that the teachers considered those errors as reasons for communicative breakdowns. Indeed, Sermsook et al. (2017), as well as Farrokhi (2012), state that grammatical errors can lead to communication failures.

To solve the issue of grammar accuracy in writing, several studies have called for WCF to enhance students' grammar usage (Sermsook et al., 2017; Sheen, Wright & Moldawa, 2009); nonetheless, WCF has one main opponent, John Truscott. Although Ferris (2010) indicates that WCF is favorable to error correction, Truscott (1996) opposes it. Truscott (1996) argues that the correction of errors through WCF can be both ineffective and harmful since it is not helpful and may produce loss of students' motivation to write. Truscott (1996) also suggests that, apart from grammar, there are other aspects "such as organization and logical development of arguments" (p. 356) teachers should pay attention to and (2007) adds that ''research has found correction to

be a clear and dramatic failure'' (p. 271). Truscott's (1996) idea of WCF as ineffective is supported, to some extent, by Wahyuni's (2017) study. Wahyuni (2017) expresses that neither direct nor indirect feedback makes a difference in writing accuracy. However, Wahyuni (2017) acknowledges that the interpretation of her results should be made with care since her study presents some flaws, such as students' confusion in interpreting the provided feedback and students' low proficiency level. Although there are few opponents of WCF, research indicating its benefits in grammatical accuracy, as well as its advocates, is robust (Atmaca, 2016; Farshi & Safa, 2015; Ferris, 2006; Hosseiny, 2014; Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017; van Beuningen, De Jong & Kuikem, 2008; Westmacott, 2017).

Evidence in favor of WCF is vast, yet there is not a consensus on which feedback strategy is the most effective. Sermsook et al.'s (2017) review article on WFC strategies highlights that direct and indirect feedback are the two mostly-debated types, and since several studies (Abedi, Latifi & Moinzadeh, 2010; Aghajanloo, Mobini & Khosravi, 2016; Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012; Jamalinesari, Rahimi, Gowhary & Azizifar, 2015) have yielded different results as to the effects of these two types of feedback, authors urge further research in this field. Additionally, there have been inconclusive results in regard to which feedback approach -focused or unfocused- is better. Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) and Sheen et al. (2009), after comparing focused and unfocused feedback, conclude that the former is more beneficial, whereas Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) argue that both approaches have the same benefits. However, Kassim and Ng (2014), as well as Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) and Sheen et al. (2009), exhort to conduct further research on these approaches considering more grammatical targets other than English articles to add evidence to which feedback approach works better in correcting different types of errors. Lastly, Nematzadeh and

Siahpoosh (2017) affirm that there is a need of further studies specifically devoted to the analysis of focused feedback as there is not ample evidence in this field.

Although there are plenty of English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) studies conducted on WCF which still suggest further research on it, there is still an even larger gap in literature regarding real EFL contexts; therefore, research in authentic EFL writing environments is required (Westmacott, 2017). As a matter of fact, after a quest on Repositorios de Acceso Abierto del Ecuador (RRAAE), only one unpublished master's thesis by Escudero and Cundar (2016), partly focusing on the role of WCF, appeared in the database. Consequently, teachers at University of Cuenca do not have a study conducted in their context that may provide insights as to how to react to grammatical errors in writing. Thereupon, the need of researching on the impact of direct focused and indirect focused feedback on grammatical errors in EFL writing.

1.3. Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What effects do direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback have on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca?
2. To what extent are the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca different from each other?

1.4. Objectives

1.4.1 General

1. To determine the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca
2. To compare the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca

1.4.2 Specific

1. To determine students' general English proficiency level through the application of a placement test before the treatment to avoid the flaw of lack proficiency-level measurement in WCF research
2. To determine the effects of direct focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca through a statistical comparison of a pretest and a posttest after the treatment
3. To determine the effects of indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca through a statistical comparison of a pretest and a posttest after the treatment
4. To compare the effects of direct focused and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca through a statistical comparison of the study groups' posttests after the treatment

1.5. Significance of the study

L2 writing is certainly a challenging skill to acquire (Jodaie & Farrokhi, 2017), and that is confirmed, in part, by students' grammatical errors during its development (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Not only are these errors present in the writing skill, but they are also present in Speaking (Swain, 2008). Thus, there must be other reasons, apart from grammatical innacuracies, for analyzing L2 writing and hopefully improving it through WCF.

According to Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017), one of the reasons for focusing on the development of writing is that writing has become pivotal in L2 acquisition since it allows learners to apply new acquired knowledge and, at the same time, promotes its own development. The importance of writing is also highlighted by El Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador that states that teachers cannot overlook the development of writing (2016b) because writing serves academic and professional purposes (2016a). Bitchener and Ferris (2012), for their part, remark the significance of writing as the means to prove if second language acquisition has occurred. Accordingly, teachers are equipped with a means to be, first, informed as to what extent students master grammar and, second, to make decisions as to what needs adjustments (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

To illustrate Bitchener and Ferris's (2012) position, after teachers are informed of grammatical errors, they usually decide to provide WCF to help students polish their weaknesses (Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017). Indeed, WCF is advocated by Ferris (2010) as a tool to overcome errors in writing by making them noticeable to learners, prevent error fossilization and, thus, allow linguistic competence development (Ferris, 2004).

Undoubtedly, WCF is an alternative to help students improve their grammatical accuracy in writing (Ferris, 2011). Notwithstanding, there is not an agreement on which feedback strategy

works best. Therefore, considering the needs in WCF research in the field of writing, this study sought to provide insights into two widely-debated strategies, i.e., direct and indirect feedback (Sermsook et al., 2017), so that teachers at University of Cuenca could make research-supported decisions when reacting to third-level students' grammatical errors. Furthermore, as this study adopted focused approach in feedback, not only may it contribute to the literature of direct and indirect feedback, but it may also contribute to the small amount of literature in the field of focused feedback as Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017) concede. Finally, this study may aid to reduce the existing gap of WCF studies in real EFL contexts (Westmacott, 2017) such as Ecuador.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theories and concepts related to errors and WCF.

The focus of this study was to determine the effects produced by direct and indirect focused WCF on run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement errors of A2 EFL writers; consequently, the participants' written output was considered for analysis. As written output was targeted, the study was framed by Swain's (2008) Output Hypothesis which considers output as the opportunity to realize the existence of language gaps in learners' interlanguage after feedback provision. With this in mind, the Output hypothesis, as well as the concepts of interlanguage and fossilization, is explained. The concepts of interlanguage and fossilization are included as the former describes the level of L2 development including errors produced by learners, and the latter describes incorrect language productions due to lack of feedback (Selinker, 1972). Additionally, the concepts of the grammatical errors targeted in this study and their general classification categories -treatable and untreatable- are explained. Finally, two specific WCF strategies -direct and indirect- and one feedback approach -focused feedback- are addressed in this section.

2.1 Interlanguage and Fossilization

Acquiring a second language involves a developmental path of correct and incorrect target language productions, and this type of in-process language is what Selinker (1972) calls interlanguage. Selinker (1972) characterizes interlanguage as having features from both the target language and a language which was previously learned, oftentimes the mother tongue. To these 2 features, Selinker (1972) adds one more which refers to the lack of function words and grammatical morphemes, among others, which take place in most interlanguage systems and may be global. Lightbown and Spada (2013) refer to the third person -s marker to illustrate a type of global error. The authors explain that two EFL learners -one from France and the other from China- omitted the -s grammatical morpheme while the learners were retelling a film by

means of writing. Hence, the authors state that the omission of the -s marker is a global error in learners' interlanguage as it occurs regardless of the learners' mother tongue.

Selinker (1972) acknowledges that the interlanguage developed by L2 learners continuously changes as more input is provided to learners. Accordingly, this process is not regular but uneven since after making progress, learners stop and then continue progressing. However, this uneven process may cease at some point. In other words, learners do not continue making progress in acquiring an L2; thus, they plateau. This event is what Selinker (1972) calls Fossilization which can occur when learners are not exposed to second language instruction or do not receive appropriate feedback to notice differences between their interlanguage and the target language.

2.2 Output Hypothesis

Swain (2008) reports that the information-processing theory, which stresses the importance of input in learning (Mitchell & Myles, 2004), was dominant and accounted for L2 acquisition at the onset of the 80's. Following this theory, Krashen (1985) proposes the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis which sees comprehensible input as the catalyst of second language acquisition. According to Mitchell and Myles (2004), Krashen's (1985) hypothesis views input as responsible for L2 acquisition provided input is comprehensible to learners, and there is a predisposition on their part to acquire a second language. Considering comprehensible input as the means to acquire an L2, Krashen (1984) identifies that the effectiveness of immersion programs resides in input. In this regard, Swain (2008) comments that French immersion programs in Canada were, in fact, widely spread during the 80's, and the results of listening and reading tests of students evidenced the programs' effectiveness as learners performed at a similar level like French-native speakers in those skills. However, the skills of

speaking and writing were at a lower level of development. Based on this, Swain (2008) proposes the Output Hypothesis as an alternative to the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis for understanding L2 acquisition.

Swain (2008) postulates her Output Hypothesis which results from her observations of immersion programs where students mostly spoke in English rather than in the target language, French. Swain (2008) stresses that the small amount of speech produced by the French-program learners was not accurate, and teachers did not require students to produce grammatically correct speech. With these notions, Swain (2008) sees the need and importance of feedback. Swain (2008) explains that when students receive feedback, they are led to modify inaccurate language productions, and this modification requirement becomes stronger when feedback comes from teachers rather than from peers. Swain (2008) defines the output hypothesis as a modification process of language productions in which learners are engaged and output as the modified version of a previous inaccurate-language production in terms of grammar, informational content, and/or sociolinguistic or discourse features.

Mitchell and Myles (2004) concede that most L2 researchers consider output as the practice of language which allows learners to use their interlanguage fluently. However, Mitchell and Myles (2004) recognize that not only does the output hypothesis have to do with language practice, but it also deals with the development of learners' interlanguage. In other words, the hypothesis, as stated previously, relates to modification processes of inaccurate language productions (Swain, 2008) which, ultimately, foster interlanguage development (Mitchell and Myles, 2004).

Swain (2008) divides her hypothesis into three functions which are the stages learners can be involved in to produce improved output. These three stages are the noticing/triggering function, the hypothesis-testing function, and the metalinguistic function.

2.2.1 The noticing/triggering function

At this stage, Swain (2008) explains that students strive to produce a target-language feature and realize or notice that they present difficulty producing the feature; consequently, students are driven to find a solution. In an attempt to produce an accurate version of the target-language feature, students create a version based on their own knowledge of the language (2008); that is, learners are engaged in L2 cognitive processes which create new knowledge or consolidate previous knowledge (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). As explained by Donesch-Jezo (2011), language production, at the noticing/triggering stage, entails the use of previously-acquired language features in a context different from the context they were learnt.

An example of this stage is the case of Martha, an EFL student. While Martha was writing about her childhood memories, she realized that she did not know the past form of the verb *go*. To overcome this difficulty, she applied her previous knowledge of the past tense rule of regular verbs; hence, she wrote *goed*. Although this past version of the verb *go* was not correct, it was evident that Martha, initially, noticed her linguistic problem, then performed cognitive processes to solve it, and she finally produced improved output. Swain (2008) explains that a linguistic gap is the impossibility of producing the target-language feature due to lack of linguistic knowledge as in Martha's case. In addition, Swain (2005) highlights that when a learner presents a linguistic gap, the teacher's task is to make the linguistic gap salient enough so that learners become aware that still there is something they need to acquire to reach the production of target-like structures. In the example of Martha, her teacher, after receiving her

writing piece, marked *goed* as incorrect, and when Martha reviewed the corrections, she noticed that she had to acquire something else in the L2 to produce an accurate version of *goed*. In this manner, the noticing/triggering function takes place once again.

2.2.2 The hypothesis-testing function

Donesch-Jezo (2011) recognizes the importance of feedback coming from either the learners' peers or the teacher in the hypothesis-testing function since after learners produce the language, they receive feedback indicating whether the language production was accurate or needs modification. Shehadeh (2003) argues that after learners realize, with or without feedback, that they possess linguistic gaps, they are provided with opportunities to test out their hypotheses as to what the correct target-language forms are. According to Donesch-Jezo (2011), learners engage in negotiating with either their peers or teacher during hypothesis testing, and this negotiation could result in output modification. Output modifications produced by learners reflect their hypotheses regarding how to say or write their message (Swain, 2008).

Swain (2000) illustrates the hypothesis-testing function through the case of two 8-year-old French learners who were involved in a writing task of retelling a read-aloud text. Sophie and Rachel intended to write the phrase *new threats* in French, and since they did not know whether *menaces* (threats) was masculine or feminine, they could not decide which adjective to use for the word *new -nouvelles* (feminine) or *nouveaux* (masculine). Although the learners did not receive feedback from their teacher, they realized that they had a linguistic gap. Then, Rachel, as well as Sophie, produced both possibilities orally to hear which one sounded correct. As Rachel and Sophie could not decide which phrase was correct, they used a dictionary to determine whether *menaces* is masculine or feminine. Consequently, they solved their linguistic gap and wrote the phrase *nouveaux menaces* in their writing task. In this example, it is noteworthy that

learners were not aided by feedback; instead, they used their own linguistic knowledge to both realize that they possessed a linguistic gap and test out their hypotheses. As revealed by Donesch-Jezo (2011), there may be times when learners do not have available feedback sources, and then learners rely on their previous knowledge of the language to test out their hypotheses. After learners find a solution, which may be confirmed by available resources (Shehadeh, 2003) such as a dictionary, a peer, or a teacher, the process of testing ends.

2.2.3 The metalinguistic function

Swain (2008) declares that the metalinguistic function is the reflective stage in the development of interlanguage because learners use language itself to reflect on their or others' produced output. In other words, language acts as a mediator in L2 acquisition (Swain, 1995). Swain (2008) reasons that a learner's reflection process starts in collaboration with his/her peers, and then it becomes individual since the learner, first, co-constructs knowledge to solve linguistic gaps, and then individual internalization of new knowledge takes place. Besides, Donesch-Jezo (2011) observes that the metalinguistic function can provide teachers with information related to learners' language-form hypotheses and learning strategies to understand language; for this reason, Swain (1995) recommends that teachers should include activities which promote on language form and maintain the objective of conveying meaning at the same time.

In conclusion, Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis attests that after learners produce their first language production, feedback ought to be provided to either confirm correct language forms or require changes when necessary. In effect, feedback is seen as a tool to raise awareness of interlanguage gaps in learners and lead them to produce modified output so that interlanguage

continues its development (Swain, 2008). Swain (2008) concedes that this process of modifying inaccurate output results in the internalization of correct language forms.

2.3 Treatable and untreatable errors

The provision of WCF involves the selection of error categories, and this, as reported by Saavedra and Campos (2018), depends on the students' needs and on the nature of errors (Ferris, 2006). With regard to the nature, Ferris (2011) frames grammatical faults into two categories: treatable and untreatable errors. The category of treatable errors is related to not applying a grammar rule governing a linguistic feature (Ferris, 2011). Among these types of errors are verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, article usage, noun-pronoun agreement, plural and possessive noun endings, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, capitalization, and spelling (Ferris, 2011). For instance, the sentence *Martha love snakes* contains a subject-verb agreement error since the third person marker (-s) in the verb is not included. The second category, i.e., untreatable errors, is related to idiosyncrasy, and students require a fuller knowledge of the language for correcting these errors (Ferris, 2011). Among these types of errors are unidiomatic sentence structure, word choice, and idioms (Ferris, 2011). For instance, the sentence *Patrick told to me about his school* contains an unidiomatic sentence structure error as there is an extra word (*to*) (Ferris, 2011). This error might be made by an EFL learner from a Spanish speaking country who is unaware that the verb *tell* means *contar a* in Spanish. Due to this unawareness, the learner adds *to* to express *contar a* in English.

Concerning this study, run-ons, fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement errors were selected as the study's targets after finding out they were frequently made in writing at University of Cuenca. These three error types, which are described below, belong to the treatable category.

2.3.1 Noun-pronoun agreement

A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun, when the noun is mentioned for a second or more times, to avoid repetition (UVU Writing Center, n.d.).

For example,

Without pronouns: Martin considers that Martin should wash Martin's car.

With pronouns: Martin considers that he should wash his car.

The UVU Writing Center (n.d.) classifies pronouns into the categories of:

a. Demonstrative (*this*, *that*, *these*, *those*)

b. Indefinite (*anybody*, *somebody*, *something*, *nothing*, *no one*, among others)

c. Reflexive (*myself*, *yourself*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, *ourselves*, *themselves*)

d. Interrogative (*who?*, *whom?*, *whose?*, *which?*, *what?*, among others)

e. Personal (*I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *we*, *they*)

f. Possessive (*my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *our*, *their*)

g. Relative (*who*, *which*, *that*, among others)

Hacker, Sommers, and Carbajal Van Horn (2011) state that a pronoun has to agree with its antecedent in number and gender; otherwise, there is an error of noun-pronoun agreement. An antecedent is a noun to which a pronoun refers or for which it substitutes (UVU Writing Center, n.d.). The subsequent sentences illustrate noun-pronoun agreement errors.

Gender error: Monique is wearing *his* new earrings.

In this example, there is gender disagreement between the pronoun and its antecedent as the female possessive pronoun is *her* and not *his*.

Number error: The dogs are chewing *its* bones.

In this example, there is number disagreement between the pronoun and its antecedent as the plural possessive pronoun is *their* and not *its*.

2.3.2 Sentence fragments

Hacker et al. (2011) point out that, whereas a sentence contains at least one independent clause which has a subject and a verb and can stand alone, a sentence fragment intends to stand as a sentence; though, it cannot for the following reasons:

a. Absence of a verb

A sentence is considered a fragment when it does not have a verb (Hacker et al., 2011). For example,

Students usually busy at the end of the semester.

Singleton (2005) comments that this is fixed by the addition of a verb as follows:

Students *are* usually busy at the end of the semester.

b. Absence a subject

A fragment occurs when there is not a subject (Hacker et al., 2011). For example,

Immediately popped their flares and life vests.

Singleton (2005) indicates that this is repaired by the addition of a subject as follows:

Pilots immediately popped their flares and life vests.

Commands, nonetheless, are not considered a fragment although they do not have a written subject, and this is because their subject (*you*) is understood (Hacker et al., 2011).

For example,

(*you*) Sit down

c. Absence of either a subject or a verb

Specifically, this is the case of phrases. A phrase, which is a group of words, pretends to stand as a sentence; though, it is not a sentence (Hacker et al., 2011).

For example,

Running for the bus

Singleton (2005) comments that this is fixed by the addition of an independent clause as follows:

Running for the bus, *I tripped and twisted my ankle.*

d. There is one subordinate clause standing as a sentence

Although a subordinate clause contains a subject and a verb, it is not a sentence since it starts with a subordinator, such as *when*, *because*, *while*, *although*, or *if* (Hacker et al., 2011). The subordinator makes the subordinate clause be dependent and require an independent clause to work as a sentence (Hacker et al., 2011).

For example,

When the cat leaped onto the table.

Singleton (2005) indicates that this is repaired by the addition of an independent clause as follows:

When the cat leaped onto the table, *we had just sat down*.

2.3.3 Run-on sentences

Hacker et al. (2011) explain that a sentence contains at least one independent clause and add that when independent clauses are inaccurately connected, run-on sentences occur. The authors classify run-on sentences into two types: fused and comma splice.

a. Fused sentences

Hacker et al. (2011) describe this type of run-on as having independent clauses together with neither a punctuation mark nor a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction joins two independent clauses and can be *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, or *yet* (Hacker et al., 2011).

An example of a fused sentence is

Air pollution poses risks to all humans it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.

From there, it can be noticed that there are two independent clauses (one in blue and one in green) joined with neither punctuation nor a coordinating conjunction.

b. Comma-splice sentences

Hacker et al. (2011) define this type of run-on as using commas to connect independent clauses with no coordinating conjunction.

For example,

*Air pollution poses risks to all humans**,** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

A comma splice can also occur when the independent clauses are connected by a word that is preceded by a comma and is not a coordinating conjunction (Hacker et al., 2011).

For example,

*Air pollution poses risks to all humans**, however,** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

To correct run-on sentences, Hacker et al. (2011) suggest five options:

1. Add a coordinating conjunction, preceded by a comma, between two independent clauses. For example,

   *Air pollution poses risks to all humans**, but** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

2. Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses. For example,

   *Air pollution poses risks to all humans**;** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

3. Place a semicolon before a transitional word. For example,

*Air pollution poses risks to all humans**; however,** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

4. Place a period to separate two independent clauses. For example,

   *Air pollution poses risks to all humans**.** It can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

5. Add a subordinator to one clause and place a comma after the subordinated clause. For example,

   *Although air pollution poses risks to all humans**,** it can be deadly for asthma sufferers.*

2.4 Written Corrective Feedback

According to Ferris, Pezone, Tade and Tinti (1997), a critical practice of teachers is to respond to students' writing. This practice is currently fulfilled by teachers through the provision of WCF (Ferris, 2010). From Kassim and Ng's (2014) perspective, WCF seems to have become pivotal in second language learning; therefore, it has been researched for decades to test both its role and efficacy in L2 development.

Ferris (2007) accentuates that teachers usually employ WCF to respond to students' writings. In fact, Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) explain that teachers see in WCF both a means to mainly correct form and content errors and a guide for learners so that they can revise their written products. Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) argue that WCF has turned to a helping class tool similar to already-known teaching strategies, such as vocabulary logs or diaries, and since current demands are centered on improving learners' ability to write, and feedback has become crucial in this process, it is impossible to exclude WCF from the teaching and learning of writing.

Corrective feedback is applied to written linguistic errors (Sheen & Ellis, 2011), and its importance is supported by Almasi and Tabrizi (2016). Almasi and Tabrizi (2016) state that learners are benefited from writing practice and revision stages, and they expect feedback from either the teacher or peers since it provides learners with insights into what they have accurately written and what needs correction. Consequently, learners use feedback to correct their errors during the revision stage and, hence, create a final draft. Keh (1990) maintains that WCF is input information coming from the teacher to the learner's written output to carry out writing revision, and according to Richards and Schmidt (2010), this input information can come in the form of comments or other options from the teacher as well as from other people. The ultimate goal of feedback, as conceived by Bitchener and Ferris (2012), "… should be to help student writers build awareness, knowledge, and strategic competence so that they can develop skills to better monitor their own writing in the future" (p. 140).

2.4.1 Focused and Unfocused Approach

There are two approaches WCF can adopt. On the one hand, the first feedback approach is known as unfocused written corrective feedback. This unfocused strategy, according to Ellis et al. (2008), is seen as a broad category of WCF since every error is targeted by teachers in a learner's written production. As a result, this correction strategy is carried out regardless of error types (van Beuningen, 2010). For instance, a teacher can provide feedback on grammatical, spelling, and organizational errors at the same time, or the teacher can target grammatical errors and provide feedback, at the same time, on tense, subject-verb agreement, article usage, possessive adjectives, adverb usage, among others. The unfocused practice has become popular in writing lessons, so it is being applied on a regular basis (Ellis et al., 2008). From this approach, Ferris (2011) reasons that unfocused feedback can benefit highly-motivated students

since they tend to analyze every error unlike other students who omit reviewing corrections. This feedback approach is useful when teachers do not have a preconceived number of errors to correct on (Ferris, 2011).

On the other hand, the second feedback approach is known as focused written corrective feedback. Ellis et al. (2008) define focused feedback as an intensive correction strategy targeting one error or error category. When it focuses on one single error, it is said to be highly focused WCF, whereas it is less focused when it targets more than one error, but still it has a limited range of errors to correct. This means that errors which are not part of the targets are not corrected at all (van Beuningen, 2010). For instance, a teacher can focus on grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreement and article usage at the same time, and errors belonging to other types are not corrected. Ferris (2011) reasons that this approach is effective in education since it provides precise information regarding frequent errors of learners that teachers have noticed. Further, this approach can maintain learners' motivation in learning as they do not see a paper full of corrections. All in all, the two feedback approaches -focused and unfocused- are related to the number of errors teachers correct in learners' writing pieces (Ferris, 2011).

According to van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2012), the unfocused approach, also known as comprehensive feedback, is considered a common practice in comparison to focused feedback. In writing, teachers' tendency is to correct every grammatical error of a students since they do not usually have a record of learners' frequent errors (Ferris, 2011). Besides, this approach is applied as the goal of teachers is to make students effective writers who can master aspects, such as writing organization and mechanics (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016a) and not only specific aspects such as grammar mastery. van Beuningen et al. (2012) add that unfocused feedback aids students during revision stages and creation of a new writing piece.

As a result, students can have a written product which is free of not only grammar errors but also organizational, word choice errors, among others. On the contrary, Ellis et al. (2008) state that learners are more engaged in realizing errors and comprehending corrections when there is a limited number of corrections rather than a comprehensive correction approach. Ferris (2011) agrees on this claim since she considers that students, generally, are more benefited from a specific number of frequent errors they can correct rather than a number of scattered corrections on a paper. Ferris (2011) affirms that most students do not feel engaged in revising every error, and they tend to look at the corrected paper and forget it. Furthermore, Ellis et al. (2008) recognize that the selective or focused approach may greatly foster accuracy development. For these reasons, a focused approach may be more beneficial.

2.4.2 Typology of Written Corrective Feedback

After revising the two feedback approaches -focused and unfocused- a teacher can adopt, and the types of errors -treatable and untreatable- an EFL writer can make, it is essential to present the different strategies through which WCF can be provided to enhance students' grammatical accuracy. For this purpose, the following classification, based on the work of Ellis (2008), is presented.

2.4.2.1 Electronic Feedback

According to Ellis (2008), the task of a teacher is to mark an error of a learner and then include a hyperlink which presents correct forms of the error. These hyperlinks can be found by using search engines, such as Google, Wiki.com, or Bing. Furthermore, teachers could build their own software to provide feedback; though, this would be time consuming. Evidently, this type of feedback requires students to electronically submit their writing tasks (Ellis, 2008).

Wahyuni (2017) remarks that this feedback strategy requires the use of computers to "generate immediate evaluative feedback on student's writing" (p. 46). As electronic feedback is computer-based, problems of access to technological devices, on the part of students, can occur. Additionally, Wahyuni (2017) emphasizes that not only is limited access an issue, but also unwillingness of some teachers to use technology.

2.4.2.2 Reformulation

Ellis (2008) clarifies that the purpose of this feedback strategy is to reword the work of an EFL writer so that it can be similar to a work done by a native writer. This rewording is carried out by a native language user, and it is expected to maintain the message the EFL writer intended. After EFL writers receive their work, they decide which reformulations they maintain (Ellis, 2008).

Reformulation intends to help learners acquire accurate language forms and choices by means of revising their re-written papers (Wahyuni, 2017). However, Wahyuni (2017) determines that "this type of feedback is impractical, if not possible" (p. 46) since this demands EFL teachers to have English native speakers willing to rewrite students work. Besides, in case the class teacher is a native speaker, "the [teacher] would need extra hours rewriting the entire compositions" (Wahyuni, 2017, p. 46). This rewriting task means a time-consuming and exhausting process for EFL teachers or native speakers.

2.4.2.3 Metalinguistic Feedback

Metalinguistic feedback, as defined by Ellis (2008), is the provision of a comment which explains the nature of errors; that is, there is information that explains what is incorrect in the target language (Nguyen, Do, Nguyen & Pham, 2015). According to Ellis et al. (2008), this

feedback strategy is directed towards the learners' explicit knowledge of the language to understand the type of error made.

Metalinguistic feedback can be provided by means of error codes, which explain the nature of the error and are written down above the error or in the margin (Ellis, 2008). Example 1, taken from Ellis (2008), illustrates error code use.

Example 1

Art. x 3; WW	A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone.
Prep.; art.	When the dog was going through bridge over the river he
Art.	found dog in the river.

Also, metalinguistic feedback can be provided through brief grammatical descriptions (Ellis, 2008). Example 2, taken from Ellis (2008), exemplifies this strategy.

Example 2

(1) (2) (3)

A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone. When the dog was

(4) (5) (6)

going through bridge over the river he found dog in the river.

(1), (2), (5), and (6)—you need 'a' before the noun when a person or thing is mentioned for the first time.

(3)—you need 'the' before the noun when the person or thing has been mentioned previously.

(4)—you need 'over' when you go across the surface of something; you use 'through' when you go inside something (e.g. 'go through the forest').

2.4.2.4 Direct and Indirect Feedback

According to Aghajanloo et al. (2016), the core difference between the strategies of direct and indirect feedback is the level of participation on the part of the learner during the correction

process. Notwithstanding, the direct and indirect strategies are similar in the fact that they can take the form of either oral or written feedback (Sermsook et al., 2017).

a. Direct feedback

Nguyen et al. (2015) explain that direct feedback refers to supplying the correct form with no further explanation of the correction, so there is a replacement of the incorrect form (Saadi & Saadat, 2015). Hosseiny (2014), for her part, states that direct feedback has an internalization effect since the learner incorporates the correct form into his/her knowledge; consequently, teachers expect students to incorporate the given corrections into their work when they are either revising or rewriting (Ferris, 2011).

Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012) propose that the strategy of direct feedback can be applied as follows:

1. An extra word/phrase/morpheme can be crossed out.
2. A required word/phrase/morpheme can be added.
3. Rarely, there is addition of a metalinguistic reference, i.e., referring students to a grammar resource such as a book.

Farrokhi and Sattarpour's (2012) description of the application of direct feedback can be illustrated through Example 3, which was taken from Ellis (2008).

Example 3

a a the
A dog stole ∧ bone from ∧ butcher. He escaped with having ∧ bone. When the dog was
over a a saw a
going ~~through~~ ∧ bridge over ~~the~~ river he ~~found~~ dog in the river.

Ellis (2008) asserts that direct feedback is beneficial because it provides students with clear guidance as to how to correct errors when they are unable to perform self-correction. Furthermore, Ferris and Roberts (2001) suggest that direct feedback is a suitable strategy for low-level students since they do not possess enough linguistic knowledge to find error solutions. Ferris (2011) adds that this feedback strategy is appropriate to treat idiosyncratic or complex errors since these types of structures are not usually governed by rules and are difficult to explain. Furthermore, if a low-level student makes this type of error, and the teacher provides vague corrections, such as error codes, the learner will not be able to understand the correct form of the error (Ferris, 2011).

b. Indirect Feedback

The strategy of indirect feedback refers to the action of pointing out that an error has occurred in a student's written work, but there is no provision of the correct language form (Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017) unlike direct feedback. According to Ellis et al. (2008), the indirect strategy motivates students to perform self-correction, and a large amount of cognitive engagement occurs (Ferris, 2011). Hence, students are engaged in problem-solving tasks from which they build their own linguistic knowledge as Swain's (2008) hypothesis-testing function evidences it.

Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012) provide options to apply indirect feedback as follows:

1. The error is circled or underlined.
2. The number of errors made in a line is jotted down in the margin.
3. A code is used to show the location and type of an error.
4. Cursors are used to show omissions (Ellis, 2008).

Example 4, taken from Ellis (2008), illustrates Farrokhi and Sattarpour's (2012) and Ellis's (2008) options for indirect feedback.

Example 4

A dog stole X bone from X butcher. He escaped with XhavingX X bone. When the dog was going XthroughX X bridge over XtheX river he found X dog in the river.
X = missing word
X __X = wrong word

In the same line, Wesmacott (2017) presents a classification of different types of indirect feedback strategies. Table 1 details the types.

Table 1

Types of indirect feedback (Wesmacott, 2017)

Indication of error type	Indication of error location	Example
Inexplicit (Uncoded)	Inexplicit. The number of errors (if present) in each line is indicated in the margin next to the line.	*1* I know that with perseverance I be able to achieve my goals. People say I am quite mature.
Inexplicit (Uncoded)	Explicit. Indicated via underlining, circling, highlighting, etc.	I know that with perseverance I be able to achieve my goals. People say I am quite mature.
Explicit (Coded)	Inexplicit. The type of error (if present) in each line is indicated in the margin next to the line.	*Gr* I know that with perseverance I be able to achieve my goals. People say I am quite mature.
Explicit (Coded)	Explicit. Indicated via underlining, circle, highlighting, etc.	I know that with perseverance I be^{Gr} able to achieve my goals. People say I am quite mature.

Ellis (2008) states that the indirect feedback strategy motivates students to carry out reflection processes on errors since this strategy does not provide the correction of errors nor all the information to correct errors. Ellis's (2008) claim is supported by Hosseiny (2014) who warns that indirect feedback provides scarce information for correcting errors; as a consequence, students are actively involved in mental processes during correction. One drawback of indirect feedback, nonetheless, is that after students hypothesize a correct version of an error, they are not sure whether the new version is accurate or not (Hosseiny, 2014). Notwithstanding, students may be able to confirm their hypotheses in future writing tasks; thus, the development of interlanguage continues.

3. Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the studies that have been conducted on ESL and EFL contexts regarding focused, unfocused, direct, and indirect feedback strategies.

Reviewing the existent body of literature leads to picture the current state of the ongoing debate on WCF strategies. With that intention in mind, this section outlines the results and methodology of several studies conducted on direct and indirect WCF strategies and on the focused and unfocused WCF approaches. The included studies in this section were grouped according to either the feedback approach or feedback strategy they employed. This grouping followed the suggested literature review organization in the studies of Almasi and Tabrizi (2016), Aghajanloo et al. (2016), Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017), and Sheen et al. (2009).

3.1 Focused vs. Unfocused

The results of studies either comparing the effects of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback or focusing on only one approach have been inconclusive. Thereupon, it can be stated that there is not a consensus on which approach works better, and authors, therefore, urge for more research on these approaches by either comparing them or focusing on one at a time. Furthermore, authors suggest adding more than one grammatical target in focused feedback groups during research (Ellis et al., 2008; Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2012; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Sheen et al., 2009).

Sheen et al. (2009) conducted a study on the acquisition of English articles of 80-intermediate ESL adults in a US college by using a pretest-posttest-delayed posttest design. The participants were divided into four study groups: focused direct feedback, unfocused direct feedback, writing practice, and control group and completed three different stories based on picture prompts. Whereas the focused group targeted articles only, the unfocused group targeted articles, copula ¨be¨, regular and irregular past tense, and prepositions. The findings revealed that focused feedback worked better than the other groups and that the unfocused approach was deemed not helpful enough in class. Moreover, Sheen et al. (2009) explained that writing

practice could contribute to improve grammatical accuracy without the need of WCF provided writing tasks engaged learners in accuracy issues as the study of Sheen et al. (2009) did. Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) agreed, on the findings of Sheen et al. (2009), that focused feedback on English articles fared better than unfocused feedback after conducting a study with 60 high-proficiency EFL participants from Iran. Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) applied The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to assure that participants had the same language proficiency level and employed a pretest-treatment-posttest study design in which participants wrote five narrative tasks and the number of inaccuracies regarding definite and indefinite articles were tallied.

Contrary to the findings of Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) and Sheen et al. (2009), a study, involving 49-intermediate EFL participants, conducted by Ellis et al. (2008) argued that both approaches had the same benefits when dealing with English articles. The study adopted a pretest-posttest-delayed posttest design and involved Japanese participants who were between 18 and 19 years. The researchers required students to write three stories based on pictures and take an error correction test before and after the treatment. In response to the claims of Ellis et al. (2008), both Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) and Sheen et al. (2009) pointed out that Ellis et al.'s (2008) study had two main limitations. First, article correction was heavily conducted in the groups of focused and unfocused feedback, so the approaches were not adequately distinguished. This flaw was indeed acknowledged by Ellis et al. (2008) in their study. Second, "their measure of learning involved just one structure – articles" (p. 52); as a result, there was no evidence whether focused feedback had any effect on other grammatical structures. For their part, Sheen et al. (2009) and Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) overcame the aforementioned limitations in their studies and concluded that focused feedback was more effective.

Similar to the conclusions of Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012), a previous study by Farrokhi and Sattapour (2011) found direct focused feedback to be better than unfocused feedback for improving accuracy of English articles in both high and low proficiency level students from Iran. The study involved 120 EFL participants who were divided into two groups of language proficiency (high and low) after administering a TOEFL proficiency test. Subsequently, the high-level proficiency group was further divided into three groups of 20 participants each; thus, there were 2 treatment groups (focused and unfocused feedback) and a control group (no feedback). The same division procedure was applied to the low proficiency level group. The participants, during the treatment, produced two stories (one as a pretest and one as a posttest) based on picture prompts and five rewriting-fables activities. Apart from the benefits of focused feedback, Farrokhi and Sattapour (2011) also determined that unfocused feedback was not valuable enough to be used in class.

Unlike Farrokhi and Sattapour (2011), Aghajanloo et al. (2016), through a comparative study with a pretest-posttest design, confirmed that unfocused feedback with a direct strategy of crossing out errors and providing their correct versions was beneficial and preferred by the majority of their participants. Aghajanloo et al.'s (2016) conclusions were drawn from an attitude questionnaire and TOEFL-based writing tasks of 120 EFL participants whose ages ranged from 14 to 18 years and who were part of four study groups: focused direct, unfocused direct, focused indirect, and unfocused indirect. Aghajanloo et al. (2016) demonstrated that, although the intermediate participants in the four treatment groups improved, the unfocused direct feedback fared better than the other three groups in terms of general writing performance.

In contrast to the results in favor of either focused (Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2011) or unfocused feedback (Aghajanloo et al., 2016), Kassim and Ng (2014) warned that both

approaches had equally significant effects on the use of prepositions after a 12-week period of feedback provision. The authors' claim derived from the statistical analysis of a pretest, post-, and delayed posttest of 90-upper-intermediate ESL students from Malaysia who wrote three 200-word descriptions of graphic prompts related to technological themes. The study of Kassim and Ng (2014), notwithstanding, presented a flaw similar to Ellis et al.'s (2008), specifically the second flaw.

As it can be seen, the findings of the reviewed studies above have not been conclusive yet. Consequently, a gap regarding focused and unfocused feedback approaches remains.

3.2 Direct vs. Indirect Feedback

3.2.1 Research evidence supporting Indirect Feedback

Several conclusions have sprung from studies analyzing the effects of indirect feedback. Ferris and Roberts (2001), for instance, compared the effects of two techniques of indirect feedback on verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, wrong word, and sentence structure. The first technique involved marking errors with codes which described the error type, and the second technique involved underlining errors with no code provision. In addition to the two experimental groups, there was a control group which did not receive feedback. Ferris and Roberts' (2001) research, developed with 72-ESL composition-class students in the United States, entailed answering a question following a short reading and editing the response, which received feedback, after 2 weeks. The results favored the treatment groups over the control group, but a significant difference between the treatment groups was not found. The researchers concluded that the inclusion of a more explicit feedback technique, i.e., error codes, did not provide more advantages than the other technique. Thereby, the less explicit technique could help teachers in the same way codes did. Furthermore, Ferris and Roberts (2001) accentuated

that, since there was no difference between these two techniques, teachers have the option to use underlining as feedback. Thereupon, grading could become faster and easier, and mistakes made by teachers while grading could decrease as well. Another conclusion drawn by Ferris and Roberts (2001) was that errors related to sentence structure, such as run-ons or fragments, were not accurately corrected during the editing phase of the response. For this reason, teachers should determine whether indirect feedback is suitable for these types of errors or not. Finally, although the control group was able to correct some errors, the correction range was limited compared to the feedback groups in Ferris and Roberts' (2001) work.

By means of a comparative study, Abedi et al. (2010) examined the effects of direct and indirect feedback on general writing performance of 30 pre-intermediate EFL learners in Iran. The study's methodological procedures involved two treatment groups: a direct feedback group, which had errors underlined and corrected, and an indirect feedback group, which had errors underlined and explained by error codes. The participants had to write 8 short essays and edit them after feedback provision. The first and last essay were the pre- and post-test, respectively. Whereas the results of the direct group did not present an important improvement in writing, the indirect feedback group benefited learners in general writing accuracy.

Following a similar line of research, Eslami (2014) carried out a study, involving 60 EFL participants from Iran, on the effects of direct feedback and indirect feedback on simple past tense errors. Eslami (2014) included two treatment groups: a direct group in which corrections were made with a red pen, and an indirect group in which error codes were used and asked her low-intermediate participants to complete three writing tasks which later served as a pretest, an immediate posttest, and a delayed-posttest, respectively. The researcher admitted that indirect feedback fared better than direct feedback and highlighted that indirect feedback may have better

effects in the long run (improved writing performance in new tasks) compared to direct feedback since learners are not spoon-fed rather they employed their previous knowledge to correct an error, and, thus, building of their own linguistic understanding ensues (Swain, 2008). To conclude, Eslami (2014) suggested that since the indirect feedback strategy required students to have enough linguistic knowledge to correct errors themselves, a focused approach might be better for low-level students.

In agreement with Eslami's (2014) suggestion of a focused approach for indirect feedback, Jamalinesari el al. (2015) also argued that teachers should focus correction on a limited number of categories after studying the effects of direct and indirect feedback on eight error types, i.e., third person singular, plural -s, regular and irregular past tense, subject-verb agreement, parts of speech, present prefer simple, passive verbs, and articles. The 20 low-intermediate EFL participants from Iran wrote 10 consecutive essays, and their progress was measured throughout the 10 tasks by assigning a score over 20 to each error type. Jamalinesari et al. (2015) attested that improved linguistic accuracy derived from the indirect feedback strategy in new writing tasks. In other words, the indirect feedback group outperformed the direct feedback group. Notwithstanding, the researchers acknowledged that continuous progress of linguistic accuracy from task to task was non-existent; on the contrary, accuracy levels differed from task to task.

As demonstrated by the preceding authors, indirect feedback has benefits on improving writers' grammar accuracy in EFL and ESL contexts. Nevertheless, not only may indirect feedback aid learners to improve grammar accuracy in writing, but the direct feedback strategy may also aid them (Shirazi & Shekarabi, 2014, van Beuningen et al., 2008).

3.2.2 Research evidence supporting Direct Feedback

Comparable to the case of indirect feedback, there have been findings in favor of direct feedback in L2 learning as well. To begin with, van Beuningen et al. (2008), who led a study encompassing 62 low-proficient learners of Dutch attending two secondary schools in the Netherlands, researched the effects of direct and indirect feedback strategies on word from, word choice, spelling, word order, addition or omission of a word, incomplete sentences, punctuation, and capitalization. The participants, whose L1 was Arabic and Turkish, were in two treatment groups: direct and indirect feedback and two control groups: writing practice and no-feedback. The direct group had errors marked and corrected, and the indirect group had errors underlined or coded. With respect to the control groups, the writing-practice group had no feedback but 2 extra writing tasks, and the no-feedback group, naturally, did not receive feedback. Data were elicited through 4 writing tasks based on Biology topics, and the data analysis unveiled that provision of direct and indirect feedback had positive short-term effects, and only direct feedback had long-term effects. According to Ferris (2006), long-term effects of WCF strategies refer to improved writing performance in new tasks, whereas short-term effects refer to writing improvement from one draft to another of one writing task.

The findings of Shirazi and Shekarabi's (2014) work revealed that provision of WCF was, generally, effective to improve accuracy of prepositions, adjectives, and noun phrases of 60 Iranian low-proficiency learners of Japanese compared to no feedback provision. Furthermore, the researchers, specifically, affirmed that direct feedback had a better impact compared to indirect feedback since the former strategy provided learners with clear corrections, whereas the latter one did not provide enough information to correct errors. Because of the scarce information given by indirect feedback, Shirazi and Shekarabi (2014) inferred that their

participants may not have known how to correct errors or understood teachers' feedback. The authors further ascertained that all errors cannot be addressed with the same feedback strategy as errors may require a different treatment. As a matter of fact, indirect feedback was effective to correct adjective inaccuracies but not preposition or noun-phrase errors in Shirazi and Shekarabi's (2014) study. The conclusions of Shirazi and Shekarabi (2014) were reached after analyzing 8 expository essays created by participants in a control group (no-feedback provision) and in an experimental group (direct and indirect feedback).

Similarly, Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) confirmed the benefits of direct feedback over indirect feedback after comparing their effects on verb tense, prepositions, and relative pronouns of 80 intermediate-EFL learners in Iran. The researchers, after analyzing right-answer provision (direct feedback) and error codes (indirect feedback) in 4 writing tasks, stressed that WCF aided students to find errors easily. Further, they indicated that adults are more benefited from feedback than children as adults were more concerned about errors. The researchers also established that direct feedback was a better strategy than indirect feedback for proficient users as the majority of their errors belong to the untreatable type such as preposition usage (Ferris, 2011).

Along the same research line, Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015) assessed the impact of direct and indirect feedback on the accurate use of English articles of 60 intermediate-EFL participants from Iran. The participants completed 8 writing tasks and were part of two treatment groups, i.e., direct and indirect feedback, and a control group. Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015) compared a pretest (first writing task) and a posttest (last writing task) statistically and, hence, determined that direct feedback had a better impact than indirect feedback on correcting learners' errors. In addition, Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015) suggested that direct feedback better served elementary-

or intermediate-proficient learners as these students' knowledge is not sufficient to amend errors, and, as a consequence, learners may evade correction.

Equally important findings are the ones obtained by Aghajanloo et al. (2016) after carrying out a feedback study involving 120 intermediate-EFL participants from Iran divided into four treatment groups: focused direct, unfocused direct, focused indirect, and unfocused indirect feedback. The four feedback techniques proved to significantly enhance the participants' writing performance after statistically comparing two writing tasks (pretest and posttest) based on TOEFL topics. Aghajanloo et al. (2016) endorsed that the most effective feedback strategy was unfocused direct feedback for teaching English writing; conseqeuntly, its application was suggested. By means of an attitude questionnaire, the participants declared that unfocused direct feedback was the most beneficial strategy as it allowed them to address all their errors.

As described above, researchers advocate for the benefits that direct feedback could have on enhancing accuracy of different grammatical points, such as word choice, punctuation, verb tense, and article usage, in EFL contexts. Furthermore, it is noted that the benefits of direct feedback are spread to the learning of other second languages, such as Dutch and Japanese, as indicated by van Beuningen et al. (2008) and Shirazi and Shekarabi (2014). Overall, direct feedback is proposed as a pedagogical tool to help students improve their grammatical accuracy.

3.2.3 Research evidence supporting both Indirect and Direct Feedback

Despite the fact that many studies advocate for the benefits of either direct or indirect feedback, there are others which report that both strategies are equally effective. In effect, Hosseiny (2014) conducted a study with 60 pre-intermediate EFL students from Iran comparing direct feedback, indirect feedback, and no-feedback provision on articles. The participants were assigned to two experimental groups and one control group (no feedback provision) and took 5

fill-in-the-blanks TOEFL tests on definite and indefinite articles. The tests of the two experimental groups received direct feedback (first group) in the form of correct answers and indirect feedback (second group) through underlining errors only. After the statistical analysis of the pre- and posttest (first and final test), it was demonstrated that both strategies were beneficial to aid grammatical accuracy in writing unlike no-feedback provision. Also, Hosseiny (2014) affirmed that there was not a significant difference between the impact of direct and indirect feedback on grammatical accuracy. Finally, she recommended that teachers ought to be trained in applying these both WCF strategies in class. Additionally, she exhorted that learners must be instructed in using received feedback so that they could enhance their writing performance.

Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017), for their part, had three research groups, and the feedback focus was on general writing ability, i.e., form and content. The 73 EFL Iranian participants produced 10 writing tasks from the TOEFL exam, and the first and last task were the pre- and posttest, respectively. Whereas one experimental group received direct feedback through provision of correct answers, the other group received indirect feedback through underlining. Once again, the statistical analysis of the pre- and posttest showed that both direct and indirect feedback helped students improve, and there was not a significant difference between the techniques.

In addition, there have been studies focusing on short-term and long-term effects of direct and indirect feedback. Rahimi and Asadi (2014) analyzed the influence of feedback in form and content. The form targets under study were verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, wrong word, and sentence structure errors of 44-intermediate EFL Iranian learners who were assigned to two treatment groups and one control group. The subjects wrote three 250-word-argumentative essays which received direct feedback (1st experimental group) on form and

content, indirect feedback (2nd experimental group) through underlining and error codes on form and content, and no-specific feedback strategy on content and organization (the control group). Each essay was edited by the learners after feedback provision, and a final version was produced. After counting the number of errors of each task and applying the ANOVA test, the researchers concluded that both experimental groups had significantly better effects in grammatical accuracy in the short term unlike the control group. Concerning long-term effects, both direct and indirect feedback were equally effective to improve form correctness in comparison to the control group which was not fruitful in the end.

Another case of long-term and short-term findings is the study by van Beuningen et al. (2012). They examined whether writing accuracy of 268 secondary-school learners of Dutch in the Netherlands improved because of direct unfocused and indirect unfocused feedback. The participants, whose L1 was Turkish and Spanish, were divided into four groups: the direct group receiving correct forms of errors, the indirect group receiving the location and type of errors through codes, the self-correction group which did not receive feedback but reviewed the writing tasks, and the additional writing practice group which had extra tasks. In total, the groups completed 4 writing tasks except the writing-practice group which completed 5 (1 as extra practice) based on Biology topics. Four tasks of each group served as a pretest, treatment, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest, respectively. The results revealed that WCF was beneficial to correct errors during revision stages, and students were able to learn from an unfocused approach. Specifically, direct and indirect feedback were positive to improve accuracy in the short term. Moreover, van Beuningen et al. (2012) pointed out that non-grammatical errors were benefited from indirect feedback in the long term; consequently, the authors proposed the

use of direct feedback to address grammatical errors so that internalization of linguistic knowledge instantly ensues.

3.3 The case against Written Corrective Feedback

The preceding research studies have found statistically significant benefits in either or both feedback strategies; nonetheless, the study conducted by Salimi and Ahmadpour (2015), after comparing two treatment groups, i.e., direct and indirect feedback, and a control group involving no feedback provision, found that none of the treatment groups made a statistically significant improvement in writing accuracy after applying a t-test comparing the means of a pre- and post-test of 30 intermediate EFL students from Iran. The pre- and post-test were two separate writing tasks which received direct feedback (corrections) and indirect feedback (indicating errors). The researchers attributed the lack of statistical significance due to the fact that there was a small number of students and stressed that although there was not statistical significance, both techniques aided to improve accuracy in the short term when the means of the groups were considered. Furthermore, Salimi and Ahmadpour (2015) highlighted that when they compared the means of accuracy regardless of p-value, the direct feedback group outperformed the indirect group in long-term effects.

One main opponent of WCF is Truscott. Truscott (1996), in his review article, analyzed the findings of 1 French as L2, 1 Spanish as L2, 4 EFL, and 4 ESL studies focusing on grammar correction in writing and concluded that error correction was ineffective and should be abandoned as the results of the studies did not favor WCF. Truscott's (1996) arguments against WCF were based on the following points summarized by Hirschel (2011):

1. Since teachers usually provide feedback to every error with a red-ink pen, this can be demotivating to students. Students see themselves as incompetent.

2. Teachers do not use a specific way of marking errors, and there are times when teachers incorrectly identify items as errors when they are not. As a result, WCF becomes inconsistent.
3. Learners' readiness to solve specific grammatical issues is not taken into consideration when WCF is provided.
4. WCF may be confusing to learners due to inconsistency in feedback strategies.
5. WCF can keep students from experimenting new grammatical structures since they would prefer to not make errors.

Additionally, Truscott (2007) supported his 1996 claim about the inefficacy of WCF after conducting a meta-analysis which considered the effect size of past studies. The studies included in Truscott's (2007) meta-analysis were 1 French as L2, 1 Spanish as L2, 1 EFL, and 5 ESL. Truscott (2007) determined that in case WCF had any effect on accuracy, the effect would be too small to be judged as favorable. Finally, the researcher maintained that teachers should devote time to more productive writing teaching tasks rather than to the application of WCF.

In general, Truscott (1996) saw WCF as a waste of time and energy. Furthermore, he stated that WCF had a harmful effect. Notwithstanding, Truscott's (1996) arguments could be solved by implementing the following suggestions in regard to ways WCF application.

1. To address the first issue, Ferris (2002) recommended using a focused feedback approach to prevent WCF from becoming overwhelming. Regarding ink color, it was found that red ink has a negative connotation. For that reason, it was suggested using a neutral color to make corrections and avoid creating negative feelings in learners (Dukes & Albanesi, 2013).

2. The second argument is also addressed by Ferris (2002), who suggested focused feedback to clearly identify a limited number of errors. Besides, Ferris (2002) recommended furnishing teachers with training sessions in feedback provision.
3. Ferris (2011) acknowledged that it was mandatory that teachers know what types of errors were common among L2 writers so that those errors were addressed as a class. Similarly, teachers had to take into account both L1's influence and different levels of proficiency. All things considered, an individualized feedback provision, based on students' needs, could take place. At last, application of a focused approach might be suitable to target common errors of a class (Ferris, 2002).
4. According to Ferris (2011), teachers must be consistent with the way they provided feedback, and this could be reached by using one WCF strategy on a regular basis. For example, teachers can use indirect feedback with only codes or underlining along with a focused approach to treat grammatical inaccuracies.
5. Lastly, in order to help students continue experimenting with the language, there could be writing tasks that receive WCF and others which do not (Ferris, 2002).

Wahyuni (2017), for her part, supported Truscott's (1996) view on the lack of significant effectiveness of WCF. Wahyuni (2017) conceded that neither direct nor indirect feedback significantly improved the writing quality of 55-low-proficiency EFL learners from Indonesia. She randomly divided the participants into two groups: direct feedback (correct forms of errors) and indirect feedback (underlining errors), and then she analyzed the effects of the strategies on the general writing performance of her participants who had different cognitive styles. The results, Wahyuni (2017) reported, evinced that, regardless of cognitive styles, WCF does not help students enhance their writing accuracy as the strategies did not make a significant

difference between the first and last (8th) writing task. Furthermore, Wahyuni (2017) endorsed the claim that cognitive styles "do not significantly influence the way students [. . .] understand the given feedback, revise or improve'' (p. 50) their writing tasks; hence, ''[t]he students' cognitive styles do not affect the mastery of students' linguistics knowledge'' (p. 50). Nonetheless, Wahyuni (2017) admitted that her study suffered some limitations; therefore, results had to be interpreted with care. Among the limitations she observed were participants' confusion in interpreting the provided feedback, participants' low proficiency level, teacher's inexperience to teach writing at that level, and absence of question-answer sessions to solve participants' doubts.

After this literature review, it becomes clear, on the one hand, that several studies have yielded positive results with regard to both direct and indirect feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hosseiny, 2014; Saverstani & Pishkar, 2015; van Beuningen et al., 2008). On the other hand, there are findings which deem WCF as not significantly helpful for students' writing development (Salimi & Ahmadpour, 2015; Truscott, 2007; Wahyuni, 2017). As a consequence, the only consensus that can be reached is the need for more insights into the field of WCF and its different strategies to shed light on their likely benefits in L2 writing. After all, the current research evidence in WCF is inclusive.

4. Methodology

This chapter presents information related to the study's research approach and design, context and participants, choice of target structures, treatment procedures, instruments, and data analysis.

This chapter describes the processes applied to design the study and carry out the treatment. There is a description of how the sample was selected, what instruments were used, how the independent variables were assigned, how data were collected, and what statistical procedures were employed.

The subsequent description of research procedures aimed to determine the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on run-on sentences, noun-pronoun agreement, and sentence fragments. For this purpose, 2 research questions demarcated study.

1. What effects do direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback have on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca?
2. To what extent are the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca different from each other?

4.1 Research approach and design

This quantitative study had a quasi-experimental research design developed with three intact classes. Randomization was not feasible as assigning 58 A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca to the three study groups would have involved schedule problems for meeting. Students, for their part, were from different majors and had different academic schedules. Therefore, applying random assignment was not feasible. Macky and Gass (2005) recognize that randomization is not viable in L2 studies due to time-meeting problems; hence, intact classes could be employed. Thereupon, the researcher opted to work with intact classes and selected three classes available to him as convenience sampling. Etikan, Abubakar, and Sunusi (2016) define convenience sampling as the selection of participants on the basis of schedule availability,

interest in participating, and available population to the researcher. Furthermore, Macky and Gass (2005) stress that "if the effects of a particular instructional method are investigated, an existing classroom [i.e., intact classes] may be the most ecologically sound setting for the research" (p. 143).

The three intact classes, in this study, were divided into two treatment groups and one control group. Since there were two experimental groups and one control group, the study adopted a control-group pretest/posttest design in which the control group took the same pre- and post-test as the experimental groups, but it did not receive the treatment (Macky & Gass, 2005). As regards the variables, the independent variables were direct focused feedback (DFF), indirect focused feedback (IFF), and no feedback provision, and the dependent variables were sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences.

Finally, the study's objective was to determine the impact the two independent variables had on run-ons, fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement errors. As a result, a quantitative design was required. Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010) affirm that a quantitative design is appropriate when researchers are interested in explaining an existent or non-existent causal relationship between variables.

4.2 Context and participants

This study was conducted at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca, a state university in Ecuador. The Institute of Languages offers three English programs, i.e., Programa Académico de Suficiencia en una Lengua Extranjera (PASLE), Intensive Courses, and Credit Courses. After receiving written authorization from the Director of the Institute of Languages (see Appendix A), the researcher, who works as an EFL teacher at the institution, selected three A2 third-level credit courses, which were assigned to him as his teaching hours at the institution,

to conduct the study during the period of September 2018-January 2019. This group selection met the criterion -available population to the researcher- established by Etikan et al. (2016) in their definition of convenience sampling. Furthermore, as the research background of WCF strategies (see Chapter 3) has presented that their effects can be researched with different proficiency levels, the A2 level was chosen. The class syllabus indicated that the third-level courses were equivalent to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The participants, who were 58 (male, n=28; female, n=30) EFL students (see table 2), attended third-level credit classes for three weekly periods of two hours each during four months. The subjects were divided into two treatment groups and one control group. The first treatment group (n=20) received direct focused feedback, and the second one (n=19) received indirect focused feedback. The third group (n=19) did not receive feedback since it was the control group. All the participants were informed of the objective of the study and requested to sign a Spanish consent form which explicitly stated what the study was about. Since they were all adults, their parents' consent was not necessary.

According to the Institute of Languages, the objective of the English classes is to furnish students with the necessary skills to be efficient users of English according to the CEFR standards. Additionally, the third-level classes are aimed to produce effective A2-level English users, and a major emphasis on the development of the writing skill, as the course syllabus demands, is placed. The English lessons at the Institute are free for students of University of Cuenca, and the lessons' focus, based on the syllabus's objectives, is the practice of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and use of language skills.

The students were not part of any major in English, but they were enrolled in other faculties. The majority of students was in the schools of Engineering and Medicine, and a small number was in other majors, such as Education, Architecture, Arts, and Law (see table 3). In general, students at University of Cuenca are compelled to take three English levels, if they belong to the credit-course program, since three EFL courses are part of the requirements to graduate in their programs. The 58 subjects of this research took and passed two English classes previously. With regard to the participants' age and L1, their ages ranged from 18 to 33 (see table 4), and their mother tongue was Spanish. With reference to hometown, most of the participants were from Cuenca, and the rest came from cities, such as Azogues, Cañar, Piñas, and Ambato (see table 5). All this demographic information was collected by means of a short questionnaire (Appendix B). Data related to cognitive styles were not collected as the focus of this study was not the influence cognitive styles have in the effects of direct and indirect feedback. It is noteworthy that the researcher was the class teacher of the three third-level credit courses.

Table 2

Gender of study participants

	DFF		**IFF**		**Control Group**	
Gender	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*
Male	12	63.2	6	30.0	10	52.6
Female	7	36.8	14	70.0	9	47.4
Total	19	100.0	20	100.0	19	100.0

Note: F = frequency; DFF = direct focused feedback; IFF = indirect focused feedback

Table 3

Major of study participants

	DFF		IFF		Control Group	
Major	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*
Engineering	15	78.9	10	50.0	2	10.5
Medicine	0	0.0	1	5.0	16	84.2
Other	4	21.1	9	45.0	1	5.5
Total	19	100.0	20	100.0	19	100.0

Note: F = frequency; DFF = direct focused feedback; IFF = indirect focused feedback

Table 4

Age of study participants

	DFF		IFF		Control Group	
Age	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*
18-21	2	10.5	8	40.0	6	31.6
22-24	7	36.8	9	45.0	8	42.1
25-33	10	52.6	3	15.0	5	26.3
Total	19	100.0	20	100.0	19	100.0

Note: F = frequency; DFF = direct focused feedback; IFF = indirect focused feedback

Table 5

Hometown of study participants

	DFF		IFF		Control Group	
Hometown	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*
Cuenca	9	47.4	13	65.0	16	84.2
Other	10	52.6	7	35.0	3	15.8
Total	19	100.0	20	100.0	19	100.0

Note: F = frequency; DFF = direct focused feedback; IFF = indirect focused feedback

4.3 Choice of target structures

Ferris (2011) acknowledges that some authors consider that native speakers of English commonly have punctuation, lexical, pronoun reference, and modification problems errors; nonetheless, L2 writers, in her claim, can also present these errors but with less frequency. The level of frequency, as Ferris (2011) warns, may vary depending on factors such as proficiency level, L1 influence, and amount of exposure to the language. Therefore, after considering these aspects, a Likert-type survey (see Appendix C) listing eight grammatical errors was built to find out what errors were common among A2 EFL students of third-level credit courses at the Institute of Languages from the point of view of the English teachers working there.

The Likert-type survey had two questions inquiring about the frequency of grammatical errors and the extent to which these grammatical errors could cause problems understanding a writing piece. Eight types of errors were listed and used in both questions; besides, a ninth item was included in each question with the goal of eliciting other error types not listed in the survey but encountered by teachers in students' writings. The selection of the eight errors in the survey was based both on Ferris's (2011) categories of treatable and untreatable errors and on the analysis of frequent errors made in 20 writing tasks of former third-level-credit-courses students. Copies of the analyzed writing tasks were provided by one third-level teacher-coworker. After the analysis, errors found in the students' tasks were matched with Ferris's (2011) categories.

Testing validity and reliability of the Likert-type survey was insured as follows: in the first place, the survey was validated with 18 tertiary English teachers at the Institute of Languages at Politécnica Salesiana University. These 18 teachers were selected since they had previously taught A2 levels; thus, they were able to provide accurate feedback on the survey. Feedback was given, from the teachers, on the clarity of questions, types of errors, and error

examples. Few changes were made as to the clarity of questions and the error examples. Lastly, it was noted, in the 9th item of each question, that teachers provided answers which fell into the types of errors already listed in items 1-8. As a result, the answers were omitted. In the case of reliability, Cronbach Alpha's coefficient test was applied. 16 items of the Likert-type scale were analyzed, and the resulting coefficient was .76 which meant that the survey was reliable (see Appendix D).

After the Likert-type survey was validated, it was applied at the Institute of Languages at the University of Cuenca using *Google Forms*. The survey was opened for 1 week and directed at 25 teachers who had A2 third-level credit courses during the periods of September 2017 - January 2018 and March - August 2018. Identification of the 25 teachers was achieved through the information facilitated by the Institute of Languages. After 22 teachers responded the survey, the results unveiled that sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences were the most frequent errors found in A2 EFL students' writings at University of Cuenca and considered, by the teachers, as a factor for communication failure (see Appendix E).

Considering the teachers' opinion was essential to decide on common errors since Ferris (2011) asserts that teachers know which errors are common among students and which errors impede the conveyance of messages. Moreover, Ferris (2011) accentuates that frequency of error types depend on factors such as L1 and proficiency level; therefore, ''[a] danger with lists of [common] ESL errors [. . .] is that they may be overgeneralized to all students'' (p. 82). In fact, Ferris (2006), based on frequency of occurrence, places run-ons, pronoun usage, and fragments (treatable errors) in the positions 10th, 11th, and 13th, respectively, which is contrary to the reality found in the third-level courses at University of Cuenca.

It is worth mentioning that the answers in item 9 of both questions of the survey were similar to the answers provided by the teachers of the piloting test. In other words, teachers at University of Cuenca also listed already-included error types in items 1 to 8 of the two questions of the survey. Consequently, the answers for item 9 were not considered.

4.4 Ethical concerns

With respect to ethical concerns, before starting the study, the participants were fully informed of the objectives and allowed to ask questions. For this information debriefing, Spanish was used. Subsequently, the participants were given the consent form in Spanish and informed that, in case they wished to withdraw the study, they were completely free to do so with no repercussions. It was stressed many times that the grades they obtained in their writing tasks would not affect their class average. Furthermore, they were told that the data collected during the study and their personal information would only be available to the researcher; hence, confidentiality was assured. After the information was provided, the participants signed the consent forms which were kept private. According to Macky and Gass (2005), a signed consent form documents voluntary participation of subjects in a study and students' complete comprehension of the objectives and stages of the study.

As to the control group, the group was decided on the basis of semi-randomization to compensate the lack of subject randomization. Macky and Gass (2005) define semi-randomization as the assignment of a treatment to study groups and emphasize that semi-randomization is an alternative to random assignment of individuals to groups. This procedure helped to reduce bias in assigning groups.

Pithon (2013) comments that a control group should possess characteristics in common with an experimental group in a study and that, unlike experimental groups, a control group does

not receive a treatment variable. The researcher ensured that the control group had similar features to the treatment groups; thus, the control group presented the same proficiency level, similar age range, same English program, syllabus, and nationality. Furthermore, whereas the two treatment groups received DFF and IFF on run-on sentences, noun-pronoun agreement, and sentence fragments, the control group did not receive a specific feedback strategy. Nevertheless, control-group participants' written productions received general comments to compensate the lack of feedback. These general comments were ''Good job'' and ''Well written'' which were similar to the ones used by Kassim and Ng (2014).

Trochim (2006) acknowledges that one ethical issue with control groups is that they are deprived of likely benefits of a treatment. However, using a control group is vital in this research for the following reasons. Ary et al. (2010) affirm that ''[c]omparisons are essential in scientific investigations'' (p. 270) like in this study. Besides, Ary et al. (2010) argue that having a control group, in an experiment, allows the researcher to ''discount many alternative explanations for the effect of treatment'' (p. 270). In other words, control groups aid to confirm whether independent variables are responsible for either positive or negative effects in dependent variables. In a similar line, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) exhort to include a control group, which does not receive any type of WCF, when the effects of WCF techniques are measured. Otherwise, the absence of a control group would reflect a research flaw since the ''findings [would not] answer the question of [WCF] effectiveness. At best, [they would] be evaluated in terms of the relative effectiveness of [WCF strategies]'' (p. 51).

4.5 Exclusion criteria

There were certain parameters that had to be met by participants so that they were able to be part of the study and of the statistical analysis as well. To start with, participants had to sign

the Spanish consent form before the study. Another exclusion criterion was participants' mother tongue; that is, participants whose mother tongue was different from Spanish were not considered in the study. This criterion was selected as the researcher's intention was to examine the effects of direct focused and indirect focused feedback with Spanish native speakers who study English as an L2. As to the statistical analysis, only the participants who took the pretest and the posttest and completed at least three out of the four in-between writing activities in class were selected. This was decided to assure that students practiced writing without using a translator software and that they reviewed teacher's corrections before composing a new writing piece so that any effect in grammatical accuracy could be directly attributed to the feedback strategies. It is reported that all the intended participants (n=58) met the aforementioned criteria.

4.6 Instruments

The study employed the following instruments to accomplish its objectives:

1. The American English in Mind Placement Test (Putcha, Stranks, Lewis-Jones & Carter, 2012) was applied to determine the actual general English level of participants. The application of this test served to be in compliance with Bitchener and Ferris's (2012) claim that WCF research requires measuring participants' language proficiency as they must have the same level when the impact of WCF strategies is examined. Otherwise, inattention to this criterion reflects a flaw in such studies (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In addition, verification of language level aids to avoid possible outliers in the research.
2. The first and final writing tasks, previously piloted (see details in 4.7.1 and 4.7.4), were used as the pretest and the posttest, respectively. They served to count the number of errors in the error categories of sentence fragments, noun-pronoun

agreement, and run-on sentences and run statistical tests to measure the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback.

3. Excel tally sheets were created to keep record of the number of errors made in both the pretest and the posttest.

4.7 Treatment procedures

The treatment procedures can be divided into four phases. The first phase comprised signing a consent form, taking a placement test, assigning groups to the study's conditions, and selecting provision procedures of DFF and IFF. In total, this first phase of the study lasted 1 week. The second phase, which lasted 1 week as well, entailed the piloting process of the pretest and its later application. The following phase involved a grammar-review session, in-between writing tasks, feedback provision, and grammar auctions during 4 weeks. Finally, the posttest was given to the students in 1 class session.

4.7.1 First phase

Initially, students were informed of the research project and its objectives. Subsequently, they were given a consent form in Spanish explaining the details of the study. The students who agreed to participate in the research signed the form and handed it back to the class teacher (see Appendix F). During the following class session, the participants took the American English in Mind Placement Test (Putcha et al., 2012) to determine their actual English level (See Appendix G). The results of the placement test determined that all students were at the A2 level.

Macky and Gass (2005) recognize that when intact classes are used in research, random assignment of subjects does not take place; nonetheless, semi-randomization can be applied. Thereupon, after the placement test, a specific condition for each intact class was randomly assigned by using Research Randomizer 2000 tool. Accordingly, one class (n=19) was selected

as the control group (no feedback provision), a second class became the first treatment group (n=20) and received direct focused feedback, and the last class (n=19) was the second treatment group and received indirect focused feedback. As direct and indirect feedback targeted three types of errors, i.e., sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences, the study adopted a focused approach. A focused approach means that feedback is given on a limited number of error types (Ellis et al., 2008; van Beuningen, 2010).

Last of all, feedback provision procedures were decided. The class teacher provided DFF and IFF in the 6 writing tasks participants completed during the study, and the feedback provision was as follows:

1. Direct Focused Feedback

Every time an error was spotted by the class teacher, it was crossed out and supplied with its correct form (see example 5). This correction technique is suggested by Ellis (2008) and has been employed in several WCF studies (Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012; Saverstani & Pishkar, 2015). Finally, direct feedback showed learners the nature of their errors.

Example 5

Freddy does not frequently wear ~~her~~ *his* glasses although he has really bad eyesight.

2. Indirect Focused Feedback

Ellis (2008) states that the purpose of indirect feedback is to show learners the existence of an error without using corrections. For this purpose, teachers can use different options (Ellis, 2008), such as underlining, highlighting, or coding. The study applied a highlighting technique by means of three colors to show learners that their errors were of different nature; however, the students were not told to which error type the colors referred since indirect feedback requires

students to find out how to correct errors (Ellis, 2008; Ferris, 2011). From there, run-ons were highlighted with yellow, fragments with pink, and noun-pronoun agreement errors with orange (see example 6). Furthermore, the colors served to count errors fast and avoid confusion while tallying them.

Example 6

Jose dislikes soccer his friend likes soccer.

Does not frequently wear jeans.

Freddy does not frequently wear her glasses although he has really bad eyesight.

4.7.2 Second phase

At the second stage, the three study groups took a pretest which consisted of writing a 180-word paragraph on a topic based on the Cambridge International Exam KET for A2 Level (see Appendix H). The pretest was piloted, in one class session of the 3rd week, with 20 students who were taking a third-level credit course and were not part of the study. In addition, two teacher-coworkers revised the pretest. According to Macky and Gass (2005), the purpose of piloting research material is to unveil any problems the material may have and solve them before applying the instruments to the actual study. Therefore, the pretest was piloted to examine different aspects, such as clarity of instructions and accurate spelling. Very few changes as to spelling and instructions were made.

Immediately after piloting the pretest, the actual pretest took place in one class session. After the participants completed the pretest, the class teacher applied, to the target errors, the specific feedback strategy each group had to receive. The feedback strategies aided to make errors noticeable to both students and the class teacher. Following feedback provision, the number of errors, within the selected error types of the study, were counted and registered in a

tally sheet (see Appendix I). Subsequently, the Kurskal-Wallis H test was applied to the results of the pretest to determine whether the control and the treatment groups were in equal conditions.

4.7.3 Third phase

The third phase of the research began with a grammar review. The participants, in the three groups, reexamined three types of sentences in English, i.e., simple, compound, and complex, along with their correct punctuation and types of errors in one class session. Although this topic was addressed during the second English level, it was necessary to review it because the syllabus of the second level did not devote plenty of time to this topic. In the case of noun-pronoun agreement, there was not any review since this grammar point had already been widely covered during the two previous English courses students had taken.

With respect to the treatment, it entailed writing tasks, feedback provision, and feedback revision. Participants wrote six email replies in total, and the first and the final reply were the pretest and the posttest, respectively. The four emails in between were mere practice accompanied by feedback and revision, and their topics were taken from the Cambridge International Exam KET for A2 Level since piloting them would mean extra time. The selection of the writing topics was carried out under the light of the syllabus as they had to be related to the syllabus themes, and data from the in-between email replies were not considered for statistical analysis.

Each class week had three sessions, and only the third session was focused on writing. The other two sessions dealt with reading, listening, speaking, and grammar to meet the objectives of the syllabus as the experiment should not harm the course program. Considering that, the included activities in the syllabus were used as input for the participants before writing. This decision was made based on Almasi and Tabrizi's (2016) study which did not neglect the

course syllabus content and activities. As a result, the writing process of each task followed this procedure:

1. Initially, there was a short video or reading on a topic followed by a short grammar explanation focusing on a syllabus point. This explanation and its practice lasted 30 minutes or more depending on both the topic and the complexity of the grammar item. According to the syllabus, the main objective, at this stage, was to familiarize students with a theme which would, later, be linked to a writing task. This structure of input first, through reading or listening, is similar to the one employed in Interchange Book 2 (Richards, Hull & Proctor, 2014).
2. Following the input stage, participants were explained the parameters for the writing task such as word count, format (email), rubric, and the writing prompt. In alignment with Saadi and Saadat's (2005) pre-writing steps, the participants engaged in brainstorming. For this objective, the participants used different printed aids, such as, Venn Diagrams and T-charts, to organize the information depending on the topic. These two steps lasted 30 minutes.
3. Finally, the participants started to write their 180-word email reply by hand, and after one hour of work, they had to submit their reply.

This three-stage procedure, applied to both control and treatment groups, was intended to occur in the last class session of each week; however, oftentimes the first two stages took longer than expected, and, in that case, the written task was moved to the following session so that writing time was not reduced. This measure was adopted since the objective was to have students compose their email replies in class and to be completely sure that they wrote their replies on their own, with no help of a translator software.

After the email replies were finished and handed in, the class teacher proceeded to read them, at home, and mark target errors according to each experimental group's assigned feedback strategy. The feedback provision, which was given to each email reply in every task, took around two hours and a half per group. In total, 30 hours were allocated for this treatment procedure of reading and marking. After teacher's marking, students usually received their email replies in the 3rd class session of each week and reviewed them for a period of 10 or 15 minutes with no further grammatical explanation from the teacher. These steps were based on the studies of Ellis et al. (2008), Ferris and Roberts (2001), and Sheen et al. (2009). It is worth noting, at this stage of the treatment, that Swain's (2008) Output Hypothesis came into play since participants were first led to the noticing function which has to do with making errors salient.

According to Ferris (2011), many authors suggest that a revision space, after students received their corrected papers, may be beneficial to learners regardless of the received feedback type and should be promoted. In fact, a number of studies (Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen et al., 2009) have included revision stages. Therefore, in order to foster the revision of errors, treatment students played grammar auctions in groups of four. Rivera (2018) concedes that auctions can be adapted to any proficiency level and class needs and are an option to have grammar reviews and promote collaborative work.

The experimental groups played 2 grammar auctions during the treatment. The first and second one took place after students received their first and second corrected email reply. For the other writing tasks (3 to 6), there were no grammar auctions as students were already engaged in revising their corrected papers. A grammar auction, in this study, involved ten sentences extracted from the participants' writings and written on a piece of paper. Those sentences had one error in each, and the errors were related to run-on sentences, noun-pronoun agreement, and

sentence fragments. After collaboratively correcting the errors for twenty minutes and assigning a price to each, the participants exchanged the pieces of paper to check whether the other group accurately amended the errors. Subsequently, the correct forms were projected on the board with no further explanation as to why they were correct. For each right answer, the group won the amount of fictitious money they assigned to each error, and the winner was the one which accumulated the highest amount of money. Each grammar auction lasted 1 hour in total.

Every revision stage took place before every writing session, and, through it, participants, with or without the aid of grammar auctions, experienced the second and third function, i.e., hypothesis-testing and metalinguistic functions, of Swain's (2008) Output Hypothesis. Participants used the language itself (metalinguistic function) to amend errors and provided possible correct forms of errors (hypothesis-testing function).

4.7.4 Fourth phase

After the 5th writing task, the class teacher piloted the posttest. The same two teacher co-workers as well as the same group of students, employed to pilot the pretest, helped to pilot the posttest. The received feedback indicated that there were not required changes. Accordingly, the actual posttest was applied, after 1 week of the piloting, to the study groups during one class session. After the study participants completed the posttest, the class teacher applied the specific feedback strategy each group had to receive. Forthwith, the number of errors, within the target error types, were tallied (see Appendix I).

In total, the treatment stage lasted 60 hours approximately for 7 weeks. The hours were divided as follows: 30 hours for marking the tasks of the experimental groups, 9 hours for marking the replies of the control group, 1 hour and 30 minutes per treatment group for feedback revision, and 6 hours per group for composing email replies.

4.8 Data analysis

Data processing was conducted on SPSS 25 software, and for the edition of charts, Excel 2016 was used. The results were expressed through measures of dispersion and central tendency; besides, in certain sections, measures of frequency were applied. Decisions were made considering 5% ($p<0.05$).

The statistical analysis, conducted by a professional statistician, entailed five stages:

1. To begin with, after applying the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p<0.05$), a non-normal distribution resulted from the obtained data; consequently, the non-parametric tests of Kurskal Wallis H test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for related samples were employed to obtain descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.
2. Then, the Kurskal-Wallis H test was run to determine equal conditions of the three study groups by comparing the results of their pretests regarding fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-ons.
3. Next, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for related samples was applied to determine whether the effects of the treatments, i.e., direct focused, indirect focused, and no feedback provision were significant.
4. Finally, the Kurskal-Wallis H test was applied to compare the posttests of the three groups of study and observe the final behavior of the data; that is, to determine similarities or differences among the feedback strategies and the control group.

4.9 Avoiding execution flaws

The selected design and methodology aimed to accurately research the effects of DFF and IFF. Therefore, past studies' flaws, acknowledged by Bitchener and Ferris (2012), were cautiously taken into account.

In the first place, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) attest that, for investigating the role of WCF strategies in second language acquisition, it is crucial to demarcate the students' current mastery level of linguistic forms or structures to which feedback types are applied. In other terms, the researcher has to know the conditions of the participants before providing a treatment. As far as studies meet this criterion, they can measure the effectiveness of WCF techniques by comparing this beginning state to a post-state after treatment (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). This study, first, guaranteed that participants were in equal conditions since the participants' grammar accuracy, concerning run-ons, fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement, was estimated by means of a pretest and its statistical analysis through the Kurskal-Wallis H test. Then, the effects of DFF and IFF were calculated with the help of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test for related samples which makes a comparison between the pretest and the posttest.

In like manner, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) state that, when measuring the effects of WCF strategies, it is important to include a control group which does not receive any type of WCF. They recognize that an effective way of studying the effects of feedback strategies is the comparison of a treatment group with a control group. Therefore, this study included a control group (n=19) which did not receive any feedback strategy and was compared to two experimental groups involving direct focused and indirect focused feedback, respectively.

In addition, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) focus on the validity of measurements. They declare that some past studies did not use, in terms of genre, similar writing tasks in the pretest and the posttest to estimate the effectiveness of feedback types; hence, they emphasize that same genres for writing have to be maintained. This study made use of only

email replies using descriptive writing genre according to the A2 level of participants based on The Cambridge International Exam *KET*.

According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012), the flaws discussed above are considered to be critical in designing an experiment in WCF techniques. However, there are other issues that should be cared when conducting a study in this field. To start with, participants should have the same L2 proficiency level (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). This issue was addressed in this study by means of the American English in Mind Placement Test (Putcha et al., 2012) which was taken by the participants and evidenced that all of them were at the A2 level. Equally important, there must be consistency in feedback provision (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). This aspect was also fulfilled since the study had a focused approach which made feedback provision easier as there were three specific error categories. Besides, the feedback techniques were well demarcated for each experimental group. Last but not least, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) emphasize that the procedures employed to elicit data must be consistent among the groups. In this case, the three study groups followed the same process of composing their email replies.

5. Results

This chapter presents the results of the pretest and the posttest of both the control and experimental groups after the application of non-parametric statistical tests.

In a first instance, this section displays the results of the statistical analysis of the pretest. After the pretest results, statistical tables exhibit the findings obtained from the posttests. These findings are first treated individually, i.e., each feedback strategy effect is explained, and then they are compared to measure differences among direct focused feedback, indirect focused feedback, and the control group. The results of the statistical analyses helped to answer the two research questions that guided this study:

1. What effects do direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback have on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca?
2. To what extent are the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca different from each other?

5.1 Pretest results

After the application of the Kruskall-Wallis H test, the results of the pretest revealed two facts. To begin with, the performance among the control and the two experimental groups, concerning run-ons, fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement, was similar as their means were equivalent; hence, the groups were in equal conditions to begin the treatment. Additionally, the results unveiled that the category with the largest number of errors was run-on sentences as participants made as many as 12 errors of this type. The second place was occupied by the category of sentence fragments since this error type occurred with a mean of 2 errors per person. Lastly, there was a maximum of 3 errors related to noun-pronoun agreement; consequently, students performed best in this category (see Table 6).

Table 6

Pretest results

Group		Run-on sentences		Noun-pronoun agreement		Sentence fragments	
		Mistakes	p	Mistakes	p	Mistakes	p
Indirect Focused Feedback (*N*=19)	Minimum	1,0		0,0		0,0	
	Maximum	12,0		3,0		6,0	
	Mean	5,1		0,5		2,1	
	SD	2,8		1,0		1,9	
Direct Focused Feedback (*N*=20)	Minimum	2,0		0,0		0,0	
	Maximum	8,0	0,966	2,0	0,493	6,0	0,487
	Mean	5,1		0,5		1,6	
	SD	1,7		0,7		1,6	
No Feedback (*N*=19)	Minimum	3,0		0,0		0,0	
	Maximum	7,0		2,0		6,0	
	Mean	5,1		0,3		1,4	
	SD	1,3		0,7		1,6	

Note: *Significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

5.2 Posttest results

The results of the posttests of the groups are displayed on the basis of the study's two research questions. Initially, results of each posttest are presented, and then a comparison of the three study groups is made.

5.2.1 RQ1: *What effects do direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback have on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca?*

5.2.1.1 Direct Focused Feedback

In the direct focused feedback group (n=20), the participants presented significant changes in the areas of run-on sentences (p=0.001) and sentence fragments (p=0.011) since there were 16 and 10 error-decrease cases, respectively. With regard to the category of noun-pronoun agreement, there were 12 participants who maintained the same number of errors of the pretest in

the posttest; consequently, significant changes were not reported (p=0.470) in this category (see table 7).

Table 7
Posttest results: Direct focused feedback

Changes	Run-on sentences	Noun-pronoun agreement	Sentence fragments
Decrease	16	5	10
Increase	3	3	2
Tie	1	12	8
p	0,001*	0,470	0,011*

Note: *Significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

5.2.1.2 Indirect Focused Feedback

After the treatment, it was found that, in the indirect focused feedback group (n=19), 15 participants decreased the number of errors in run-on sentences. This resulted in a significant difference of p=0.002. In the area of sentence fragments, there were 8 error-decrease cases producing a significant change of p=0.035. Finally, there were 12 cases of tie in terms of noun-pronoun agreement errors which reflected a lack of general modifications within the group; as a consequence, significant changes were not reported (see table 8).

Table 8
Posttest results: Indirect focused feedback

Changes	Run-on sentence	Noun-pronoun agreement	Sentence fragments
Decrease	15	5	8
Increase	2	2	1
Tie	2	12	10
p	0,002*	0,086	0,035*

Note: *Significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

5.2.1.3 Control Group: No feedback provision

In the control group (n=19), there were 4 error-increase and 5 tie cases in relation to run-on sentences. Besides, it was registered that 10 participants made fewer errors in this category. Despite the recorded decrease, there were not significant changes (p=.070) to report. Lastly, in terms of noun-pronoun agreement and sentence fragments (p>0.05), there were several students who maintained the same number of errors before and after the treatment; thus, no significant change occurred (see table 9).

Table 9
Posttest results: Control group

Changes	Run-on sentence	Noun-pronoun agreement	Sentence fragments
Decrease	10	3	3
Increase	4	1	8
Tie	5	15	8
p	0,070	0,450	0,241

Note: *Significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

Overall, there were significant changes in the categories of run-on sentences and sentence fragments in the groups of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback. However, significant changes in the error category of noun-pronoun agreement were not reported in neither treatment group. Finally, the control group did not present significant changes in any of the grammatical targets, i.e., run-on sentences, noun-pronoun agreement, and sentence fragments.

5.2.2 RQ2: *To what extent are the effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca different from each other?*

5.2.2.1 Comparison of the differences between the pretest and posttest of each treatment group and the control group

The changes between the pretest and the posttest of the control and the two experimental groups were compared to find out whether there were similarities or differences among the produced effects of direct focused feedback, indirect focused feedback, and no feedback provision. With regard to run-on sentences, the positive effects, i.e., error decrease, of the two treatment groups were similar, whereas the changes produced in the control group were significantly inferior in comparison (p=.045). In the area of noun-pronoun agreement, the produced changes in the three study groups were not significantly different (p > 0.05). Lastly, the participants who received direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback presented equal positive changes in the error category of sentence fragments; nonetheless, the control-group participants regressed. In this category, the significant difference reported among these three study groups was p=0.007 (see table 10).

Table 10

Difference between the pretest and posttest

	Groups						
	Indirect Focused Feedback		**Direct Focused Feedback**		**No Feedback**		**p**
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Posttest – Pretest (*Run-on sentences*)	-2,8	3,0	-2,8	2,5	-1,1	2,5	0,045*
Posttest – Pretest (*Noun-pronoun agreement*)	0,4	1,1	0,2	0,9	0,2	0,8	0,851
Posttest – Pretest (*Sentence Fragments*)	-1,1	1,9	-1,1	1,7	0,4	1,5	0,007*

Note: *Significant difference (p ≤ 0.05)

5.2.2.2 Comparison of the posttests of the two treatment groups and the control group

The final statistical test applied was the Kurskal-Wallis H test to compare the results of the posttests of the control group and the two treatment groups. The results of this analysis confirmed the differences and similarities found among the control, direct focused feedback, and indirect focused feedback groups. To start with, there was a significant difference among the study groups in run-on sentences (p=0.007) and sentence fragments (p=0.005). Furthermore, the two experimental groups presented similar positive effects between them and fared better than the control group in the categories of run-ons and fragments. In terms of noun-pronoun agreement, there was not a significant difference among the three study groups (p>0.05) (see table 11)

Table 11

Posttest writing features

Group		**Run-on sentences**		**Noun-pronoun agreement**		**Sentence fragments**	
		Mistakes	p	Mistakes	p	Mistakes	p
Indirect Focused Feedback	Minimum	0,0		0,0		0,0	
	Maximum	5,0		1,0		4,0	
	Mean	2,3		0,1		1,0	
	SD	1,3		0,3		1,3	
Direct Focused Feedback	Minimum	0,0		0,0		0,0	
	Maximum	7,0		2,0		2,0	
	Mean	2,3	0,007*	0,3	0,201	0,5	0,005*
	SD	2,1		0,6		0,8	
No Feedback	Minimum	1,0		0,0		0,0	
	Maximum	8,0		2,0		6,0	
	Mean	4,0		0,1		1,8	
	SD	1,9		0,5		1,6	

*Note: *Significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)*

6. Discussion and conclusions

This chapter presents the interpretation of the results under the light of the literature review and theoretical framework. Additionally, limitations of this study are acknowledged, and conclusions, on the study's focus, are made. Finally, pedagogical implications are provided.

After conducting the statistical tests, the results of the study were obtained. At this point, it is feasible to compare the findings of this research to the findings of previous studies conducted in the field of WCF strategies. Furthermore, some limitations of this study are acknowledged, and some suggestions for further research are made. Moreover, the contributions of this study in research, at both global and local level, are recognized, and pedagogical implications are explained as well. Finally, some conclusions are drawn from the study. For organization purposes, the discussion section is carried out by means of the two research questions; hence, it was divided into two parts, i.e., section 6.1.1 and section 6.1.2. It is pivotal to remark that the results of this study are unique to this specific sample and are not universal in nature.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 RQ1: *What effects do direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback have on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca?*

The study's first research question was to investigate the effects of direct and indirect feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences. The results of direct feedback indicated that this strategy was beneficial and had a significant impact on the categories of fragments ($p=0.011$) and run-ons ($p=0.001$). These results are in line with van Beuningen et al.'s (2008) and Shirazi and Shekarabi's (2014) findings which confirmed that direct feedback is advantageous for low-proficient users as it acts as a clear guide for learners (Ferris, 2011). Similarly, Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015) report that a direct strategy favored students in correcting errors. Additionally, Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) and Aghajanloo et al. (2016) supported the view that direct feedback enhances grammatical accuracy

of EFL students at an intermediate level. Thereupon, not only might direct feedback be beneficial to low-proficiency learners but also to more advanced learners. Overall, direct feedback may help learners because of its straight manner of addressing errors as Ellis (2008) asserted.

It seems to be that the participants of this study found in direct feedback unambiguous guidance in error correction as the strategy explained the nature of their errors and correct forms. In effect, both Ellis (2008) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) advocated for direct feedback to be applied in low-level learners as it explicitly guides them to amend grammatical inaccuracies. As a consequence, this strategy may effectively aid low-proficiency EFL learners at University of Cuenca.

Interestingly, these positive outcomes are contrary to prior studies which claimed that direct feedback, unlike indirect feedback, did not create writing improvement in learners (Abedi et al., 2010; Eslami, 2014; Jamalinesari et al., 2015). This inefficacy may be explained in terms of favoring indirect-feedback participants with extra practice as in Abedi et al. (2010). Abedi et al. (2010) compelled their indirect-feedback participants to re-write their marked papers after revision, whereas the direct-feedback participants were expected, not required, to review corrections. Evidently, there were not similar after-feedback procedures. Besides, Abedi et al. (2010), Eslami (2014), and Jamalinesari et al. (2015) worked with intermediate students; hence, direct feedback may not have had a positive impact due to the fact that this technique appears to better suit lower proficiency levels (Ferris, 2011; Sermsook et al., 2017; Wahyuni, 2017). Notwithstanding, Aghajanloo et al. (2016) and Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) proved the opposite after working with intermediate students since their participants were benefited from direct correction. All in all, further research on the effects of direct feedback with different proficiency levels is still needed to clarify this debate (Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2012).

As to the indirect strategy, the results demonstrated that this technique, in the form of highlighted errors, was significantly effective at correcting sentence fragments (p=0.0035) and run-ons (p=0.002). This result corroborates Ferris and Robert's (2001) assertions that indirect feedback was generally effective to increase grammatical accuracy in their studies. However, Ferris and Roberts (2001) advised that the benefits of the technique on fragments and run-ons were limited in their research. One likely explanation for this discrepancy can be participants' background. Ferris and Roberts (2001) included, in their research, ESL students who had previously been exposed to English both informally and orally (Ferris, 2011). In consequence, these learners, as stressed by Ferris (2011), may not have had sound grammar knowledge to correct errors, and because of that, they may have based their linguistic selections on what sounds correct or incorrect. On the contrary, EFL or international learners, like the ones in this study, usually have a prior solid grammar education (Ferris, 2011) which may have allowed them to accurately correct fragments and run-ons via indirect feedback.

With respect to the use of error codes, Ferris and Roberts (2001) refuted that the absence of codes might curtail the positive impact of indirect feedback and established that application of this technique without codes was as advantageous as its application with codes. Thereof, Abedi et al.'s (2010) results, after using codes, can be assumed to support the positive view on indirect feedback. In the case of this research, highlighting as an indirect strategy was employed, and it proved to be efficient; thereby, the study is consistent with Ferris and Roberts' (2001) conclusions. It is interesting to note, however, that the A2-level participants were able to enhance their grammatical accuracy through indirect feedback although Ferris (2011) warned that this technique may not be effective with low-level learners as they do not possess enough linguistic knowledge to work on errors. It is likely that the A2-level participants improved for the reason

that EFL students usually have a prior solid grammar education (Ferris, 2011). This basic, though still strong, knowledge might have helped learners overcome inaccuracies.

The studies of Eslami (2014) and Jamalinesari et al. (2015) are also in accord with the fact that indirect feedback had a positive impact on grammatical accuracy of writers. To a lesser degree, Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) and Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015) affirmed that indirect feedback was useful. Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012) and Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015), for their part, reported that, although direct feedback helped improve grammatical accuracy more than indirect feedback, the effects of the indirect technique could not be disregarded.

In relation to no-feedback provision, the findings of this work indicated that lack of WCF was ineffective to enhance writing accuracy, i.e., error correction. This finding is in agreement with Ferris and Roberts (2001), Sarvestani and Pishkar (2015), and van Beuningen et al. (2008) who point out that students require some form of WCF so that they can amend their grammatical errors and advance in their learning; otherwise, they are impeded from improving. In this study, practice itself evidenced that it is not enough to attain grammar mastery. Hence, students need a guide to assess their actual knowledge and determine what they still need to improve, and one option for those two purposes is WCF strategies (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

In the field of focused feedback, it can be reported that this approach was suitable for A2 students to correct errors related to run-ons and fragments. This outcome is on a par with Eslami's (2014) and Jamalinesari et al.'s (2015) conclusions that focused feedback should be applied in low levels of proficiency since learners do not have enough linguistic knowledge to use unfocused feedback to correct grammatical errors (Eslami, 2014). In a like manner, Farrokhi and Sattapourt (2011) asserted that focused feedback had positive effects on correcting errors at

low levels, and its application created the conditions for direct and indirect feedback to be beneficial.

Apparently, a focused approach was advantageous for A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca since the learners worked with an easy-handle number of error types; that is, participants worked on 3 common occurring errors at their level which were recognized by their teachers. Ferris (2011) extoled the use of the focused approach in class as an intensive correction strategy (Ellis et al., 2008) of students' regular grammar errors, which are noticed by teachers, in order to avoid communication breakdowns (Sermsook et al., 2017). Another probable explanation of the efficacy of the focused approach in this study is that as the participants focused on that specific number only, they may not have felt overwhelmed nor may they have felt discouraged by excessive corrections while amending their errors. Consequently, they continued experimenting the language. As a matter of fact, Ferris (2011) substantiated that focused feedback prevents learners from motivation loss due to limitless corrections in their papers. Finally, as Farrokhi and Sattapourt (2011) affirmed, a focused approach may pave the path for both direct and indirect feedback so that the strategies, together with the approach, can work well. This might be the reason of the effectiveness of DFF and IFF in this research.

Complementarily, Sheen et al.'s (2009) and Farrokhi and Sattapour's (2012) results corroborate the findings of this work since they revealed that direct focused feedback aided to improve grammatical accuracy. The work of Sheen et al. (2009) and Farrokhi and Sattapour (2012) was, however, developed with intermediate learners unlike this study. Thereby, it can be said that DFF benefits both intermediate and low-proficient English users. This double-sided benefit might dwell in the fact that a focused approach makes learners, regardless of their mastery level, clearly notice specific errors, and engage them in systematic hypothesis testing to

amend inaccuracies. In general terms, the approach makes students observe their writing development (Sheen et al., 2009). Sheen et al. (2009) makes reference to Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis as it sees language production as an opportunity for learners to notice their linguistic gaps, hypothesize alternatives to solve their gaps, and reflect on their interlanguage development by using language itself. The three stages of the hypothesis take place when feedback is applied (Swain, 2008).

6.1.2 RQ2: *To what extent are the possible effects of direct focused feedback and indirect focused feedback on sentence fragments, noun-pronoun agreement, and run-on sentences in writing tasks of A2 EFL students at University of Cuenca different from each other?*

After comparing the posttests of the control and the experimental groups, it was verified that both DFF and IFF had equal positive effects in the correction of fragments and run-ons. The fact that direct and indirect feedback produced both a significant and analogous impact on grammatical accuracy is supported by Hosseiny (2014), Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017), and Rahimi and Asadi (2014) who analyzed WCF strategies' long-term effects. It seems to be that the equal efficacy of the techniques, in this research of long-terms, stemmed from both same review stages and teacher's consistency during feedback provision.

During the treatment of this study, both experimental groups had the same after-feedback steps. This could mean that reviewing errors aided to acquire correct language forms and that students should be exposed to alike review conditions to make WCF strategies, irrespective of their type, work. The assumption of exact review procedures for the efficacy of WCF techniques is based on Abedi et al. (2010) who did not use same review procedures, and hence the indirect group fared better than the direct one. Additionally, both corrective strategies might have worked

similarly well since the class teacher was consistent in their application. In other words, each treatment group received its assigned technique exactly the same way throughout the 6 writing tasks. As a matter of fact, Ferris (2001) remarked that feedback strategies should be consistently applied to learners' work to be advantageous and avoid students' confusing (Truscott, 1996) during revision stages.

Interestingly enough, favorable results of both direct and indirect feedback techniques have been found in other L2s, apart from English. Shirazi and Sekarabi (2014) and van Beuningen et al. (2008, 2012) maintained that the aforementioned strategies increased grammatical accuracy in learners of Japanese and Dutch in long terms. Accordingly, it can be said that, regardless of what L2 is involved, corrective feedback is beneficial in general; hence, its importance (Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017). Besides, WCF may be generally effective as it furnishes learners with a clear picture of what they need to work on (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

In terms of noun-pronoun agreement, participants, in any study group, did not present positive changes that were statistically relevant. This might be explained because students did not struggle much with this category; in essence, students performed best in this area in the pretest since they made this error type to a maximum of 3. The obtained number was not worrisome contrary to what teachers at University of Cuenca believed. There are two possibilities that might account for the teachers' belief. To begin with, the frequent-error survey, which was used to choose this study's targets, required teachers to answer from their previous experience with third-level courses; thus, one explanation for their belief might be frequent past encounters with noun-pronoun agreement errors in learners' compositions. Nonetheless, Ferris (2011) argues that ''not all students make the same types of errors'' (p. 85), and this might have been the case of the study's sample. Apparently, it is not possible to generalize errors of a group

of students to other groups in spite of the fact that the students belong to the same context. Moreover, Ferris (2011) highlights that learners' errors depend on both previous L2 exposures and actual L2 proficiency. Credit-course students are required to take two levels before the third one; however, students have the option to take a proficiency test created by the teachers of the Institute. This test assigns them a grade to pass one, two, or even the three levels based on their performance in listening, reading, writing, and use of language. The test, nevertheless, is vastly focused on skills other than grammar; consequently, an unknown percentage of former students might have passed two levels without sufficient grammar knowledge and, thus, poorly performed during the third level. Thereof, teachers identified noun-pronoun agreement as a weak area. Altogether, the reality of the study's sample was somewhat different, in this area, from what the teachers expressed in the survey. Nonetheless, participants presented a smaller number of inaccuracies than expected.

Truscott (1996, 2007) claimed that error correction can be harmful to learners, and it should, therefore, be abandoned. Contrarily, Hosseiny (2014), Nematzadeh and Siahpoosh (2017), and this study coincide on the fact that lack of WCF strategies does not produce grammatical accuracy enhancement. This agreement is evidenced in the employed control groups of the studies as the participants did not significantly advance in correcting errors when WCF strategies were absent. A possible explanation to this could be that as students were not informed of their grammatical errors, they did not know what their flaws were. In this line, Swain (2008) attests that errors have to be made noticeable to student so that they hypothesize accurate forms and learn from them.

A particular finding of this research is that control-group subjects regressed in the category of fragments. One possibility that accounts for this particular result is Hosseiny's

(2014) claim. The researcher admitted that WCF creates opportunities for students to correct and practice target structures, and when they do not have those guided opportunities, they do not improve their grammar mastery. Thereby, it may be inferred that lack of feedback can be detrimental. In fact, Ferris and Roberts (2001) substantiated a negative side of WCF absence by insisting that, when students do not receive corrections, and they are expected to improve, they may become frustrated. It can be implied that frustration may be harmful to students as they may stop experimenting with language; thus, they plateau (Selinker, 1972).

At last, as this study was framed by the Output Hypothesis, the feedback process involved the three stages proposed by Swain (1995). First, errors were noticeable to students by means of direct and indirect feedback, and then participants had the opportunity to hypothesize correct forms and reflect on their gaps to learn. In other terms, participants experienced the phases of noticing, hypothesis-testing, and metalinguistic, respectively, and learnt to produce accurate sentences, avoiding run-ons and fragments. Hosseiny (2014) stated, for her part, that students, after being provided indirect feedback, needed instances in which they were able to test their hypotheses of the correct version of an error. The participants of this study had the opportunity to test (confirm or reject) their hypotheses in subsequent new writing tasks as the teacher provided feedback which either approved or rejected structures. To conclude, Swain (1995) highlights that, when feedback is added to output, both raise awareness of interlanguage gaps in students, and learners, as a consequence, produce improved output. As a matter of fact, the subjects of this study, after being provided WCF strategies, reviewed and then corrected their linguistic inaccuracies in new writing tasks. This seems to have resulted in grammatical accuracy as the findings displayed.

6.2 Limitations and Recommendations

This study had certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the findings can only be interpreted and applicable to the correction of sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and noun-pronoun agreement in this specific context. Hence, there is still a need to conduct more research on various error categories (Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2012; Sheen et al., 2009) in different contexts. Likewise, since the results of this work were compared to a small number of studies which dealt, to an extent, with the study's grammatical targets, more research particularly focusing on sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and noun-pronoun agreement is exhorted.

Further, significant changes in the areas of noun-pronoun agreement were not reported, and this could be accounted for the fact that the reality inside the classroom was different from what teachers at University of Cuenca perceived. Therefore, it is appropriate to find another target in the reality of University of Cuenca to conduct research on. Considering, and not disregarding, this error type was because students indeed presented, although limited in number, noun-pronoun agreement issues, and there was the assumption that this type of errors may create miscommunication if they were not addressed. It is essential to emphasize that, although the feedback strategies did not produce a significant change in this category, it does not mean the strategies did not make a difference. In effect, there was a decrease of these errors (see Appendix I) but not as meaningful as to be statistically important.

As this study used the focused approach only, evidence related to the unfocused approach was not obtained; consequently, it was not possible to make a comparison between these two approaches. Thereof, results only add evidence to the focused field, specifically. Nonetheless, more studies focusing on either a comparison or a single approach are still required (Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2012; Kassim & Ng, 2014). Additionally, the number of participants (n=58) has

context-specific characteristics; hence, the obtained results cannot be generalized to other realities. In other words, the findings can only be interpreted for learners who possess an A2 proficiency level in English, attend third-level credit courses at University of Cuenca, and whose L1 is Spanish.

6.3 Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

This study has attempted to fulfill its aims as its results might contribute insights into the largest ongoing debate on whether or not direct and indirect feedback are beneficial (Sermsook et al., 2017). Furthermore, some contributions to the field of feedback approaches have been provided; though, this field still needs further research (Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2012; Kassim & Ng, 2014;) that considers more grammatical targets (Sheen et al., 2009; Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2012). One more contribution has specifically been made to the focused approach as there is a gap of literature in this area (Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017). Finally, although this study was conducted in Ecuador, a gap regarding WCF studies in true EFL contexts still remains (Wesmacott, 2017). Therefore, research in true EFL contexts, especially in Latin America, are called for.

Truscott (1996) pointed out that written corrective feedback was not effective to improve accuracy and added that the studies conducted on this realm have proven that feedback is indeed unsuccessful (2007). Supporting Truscott's view, Wahyuni (2017) noted in her study that regardless of cognitive styles, written corrective feedback strategies did not help students enhance their writing accuracy; however, she acknowledged that her study suffered some limitations; thus, the results had to be interpreted with care. Contrary to Truscott (1996 and 2007) and Wahyuni (2017), the findings of this work evidenced that WCF strategies may be an aid an aid to amend learners' grammatical errors in writing. The findings of this work are in line

with the reported WCF benefits of previously conducted studies (e.g., Atmaca, 2016; Farshi & Safa, 2015; Ferris, 2006; Hosseiny, 2014; Nematzadeh & Siahpoosh, 2017; van Beuningen et al., 2008; Westmacott, 2017).

All in all, adopting a focused approach can be beneficial to amend grammar errors of low-level students and of other levels (e.g., Sheen et al., 2009; Farrokhi & Sattapour, 2012). Therefore, teachers should focus on a limited number of errors to correct, usually the ones oftentimes made by students (Ferris, 2011). The focused approach may be accompanied by either a direct or indirect feedback strategy since both could create a significant improvement in grammatical accuracy, especially in run-ons and fragments, as this study reported. Consequently, teachers ought to be trained in the application of these strategies (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hosseiny, 2015; Sarvestani & Pishkar, 2015) to provide accurate feedback to students. Last but not least, there are several manners to apply WCF such as underlining, circling (Ellis, 2008), or highlighting. It is suggested, however, the avoidance of red ink in WCF as this may create negative emotions in learners (Dukes & Albanesi, 2013; Truscott, 1996) because of its traditional connotation. Instead, EFL instructors could use different colors. Notwithstanding, it is pivotal to recognize that the connotations of red ink may vary from context to context.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: Permission from the Institute of Languages, Universidad de Cuenca

Uno (1)

7. Solicitudes

7.1.- Se conoce la comunicación enviada por el Lcdo. Jorge Villavicencio quien solicita autorización para aplicar la tesis dentro de la Maestría de Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera. Será implementada con los estudiantes del tercer nivel de créditos durante los meses de octubre 2018 a enero 2019.

Los miembros del Consejo Académico resuelven aprobar la solicitud presentada por el Lcdo. Jorge Villavicencio y autorizar la aplicación de la tesis titulada: "Effects of Direct Focused and Indirect Focused Feedback on Sentence Fragments, Noun-pronoun Agreement, and Run-on Sentences in Writing Tasks of A2 EFL Students at Universidad de Cuenca" con los alumnos del tercer nivel de créditos durante los meses de octubre 2018 a enero 2019, de acuerdo con los documentos adjuntos a la presente solicitud.

Razón.-Siento como tal que la resolución de fecha 28 de octubre de 2018 que antecede, constante en una foja útil es fiel copia de su original.

Cuenca, 16 de Mayo de 2019

María Lorena Carpio Balomeque
Secretaria Abogada (E) del Instituto Universitario de Lenguas

Instituto Universitario de Lenguas
SECRETARÍA

APPENDIX B: Demographic questionnaire

CUESTIONARIO PARA PARTICIPANTES
INFORMACIÓN BÁSICA

1. Nombres y Apellidos: _____
2. Edad: _____
3. Sexo: M ☐ F ☐
4. Ciudad Natal: _____
5. Lengua Materna: Español ☐ Otra: ☐ _____
6. Carrera que cursa actualmente: _____
7. ¿Es Inglés su segunda lengua? Sí ☐ No ☐
8. Marque los niveles de Inglés que ha tomado en la Universidad.

   1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ (Me encuentro repitiendo)

APPENDIX C: Likert-type survey

GRAMMAR ERRORS IN WRITING

1. How often do you find these errors in your students' writing tasks?
   Please circle one number in the chart below to show the frequency of errors

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

Type of error	Example (based on students' writing work)	How often?
1. Sentence fragments	1. went to the beach last weekend. 2. Patrick his blue jeans.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Word choice	1. We like to hear music.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Noun – Pronoun agreement	1. Daniel bought a new pet. Your pet is a dog.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Word order (Adj. + noun)	1. Martha found a bracelet red.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Indefinite Article	1. I have new bike.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Definite Article	1. Sun seems to be dying.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Subject – Verb agreement	1. Matilda jog every morning.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Run-on sentences	1. I went to Peru yesterday, Marco went to Loja this morning.	1 2 3 4 5
9. Others: _____ _____	 _____ _____	 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

2. In your view, how far do you agree that the errors below cause a problem to understand the message of a student's writing task?

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Type of error	Example (based on students' writing work)	How far?
1. Sentence fragments	1. went to the beach last weekend. 2. Patrick his blue jeans.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Word choice	1. We like to hear music.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Noun – Pronoun agreement	1. Daniel bought a new pet. Your pet is a dog.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Word order (Adj. + noun)	1. Martha found a bracelet red.	1 2 3 4 5
5. Indefinite Article	1. I have new bike.	1 2 3 4 5
6. Definite Article	1. Sun seems to be dying.	1 2 3 4 5

7.	Subject – Verb agreement	1. Matilda jog every morning.	1 2 3 4 5
8.	Run-on sentences	1. I went to Peru yesterday, Marco went to Loja this morning.	1 2 3 4 5
9.	Others: (the ones you added in Question 1) _____ _____	_____ _____	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX D: Validation of the Likert-type survey

CRONBACH ALPHA'S COEFFICIENT

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.760	16

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
53.78	45.948	6.778	16

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
i1	3.17	.786	18
i2	3.67	1.188	18
i3	4.11	.832	18
i4	4.11	.900	18
i5	3.56	1.042	18
i6	3.17	.924	18
i7	3.72	.958	18
i8	3.28	1.127	18
ii1	3.39	.850	18
ii2	2.78	.808	18
ii3	3.50	.786	18
ii4	3.11	.963	18
ii5	3.22	.878	18
ii6	3.06	.802	18
ii7	2.89	.758	18
ii8	3.06	.802	18

The selection of grammar errors to be part of the Likert-type scale were based on the analysis of what type of errors students made in their writing tasks and Ferris's (2011) category of treatable and untreatable errors. Also, to illustrate flaws, similar examples to students' real errors were employed.

Regarding Cronbach Alpha's coefficient, although the Likert-type scale had 18 items to be answered, only 16 were analyzed since the answers for item 9 of question 1 and item 9 of question 2 contained answers that fell into the categories of the errors listed in items 1 to 8. The survey was validated with 18 tertiary English teachers at the Language Institute at Politécnica Salesiana University. The 18 teachers were selected since they had previously taught A2 levels. Feedback was given on the clarity of questions, types of errors and their examples, having almost no changes to the questions nor to the types of errors. As it can be seen, the coefficient is .76 which means the survey is reliable.

APPENDIX E: Analysis of the answers to the Likert-type survey

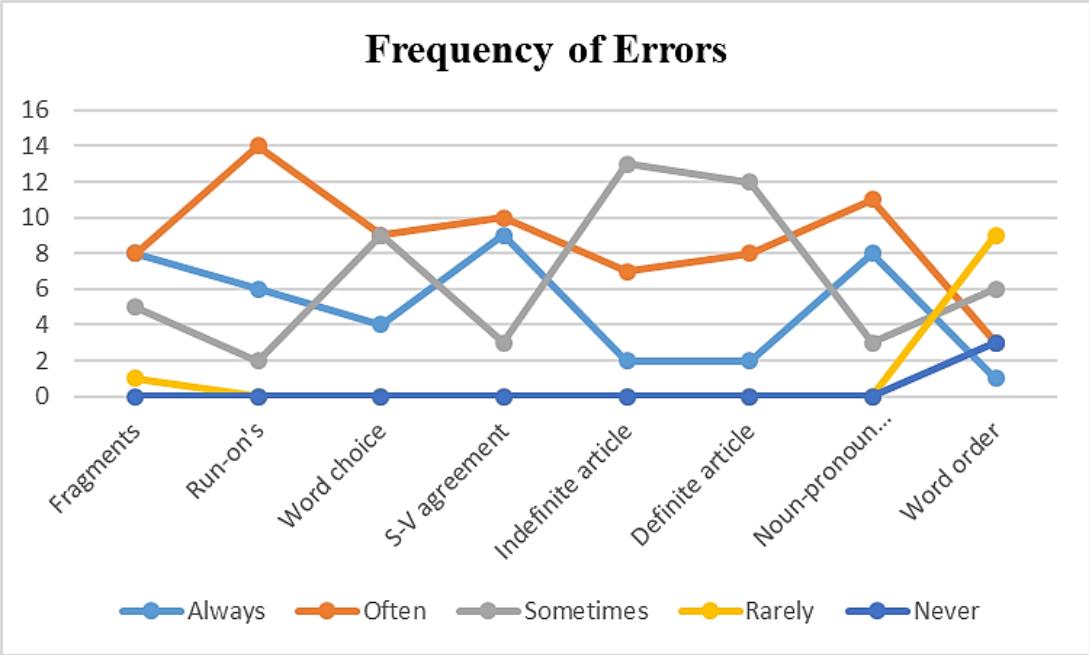

Figure 8: This figure presents the frequency of errors. The three highest errors are run-on's, S-V agreement, noun-pronoun agreement.

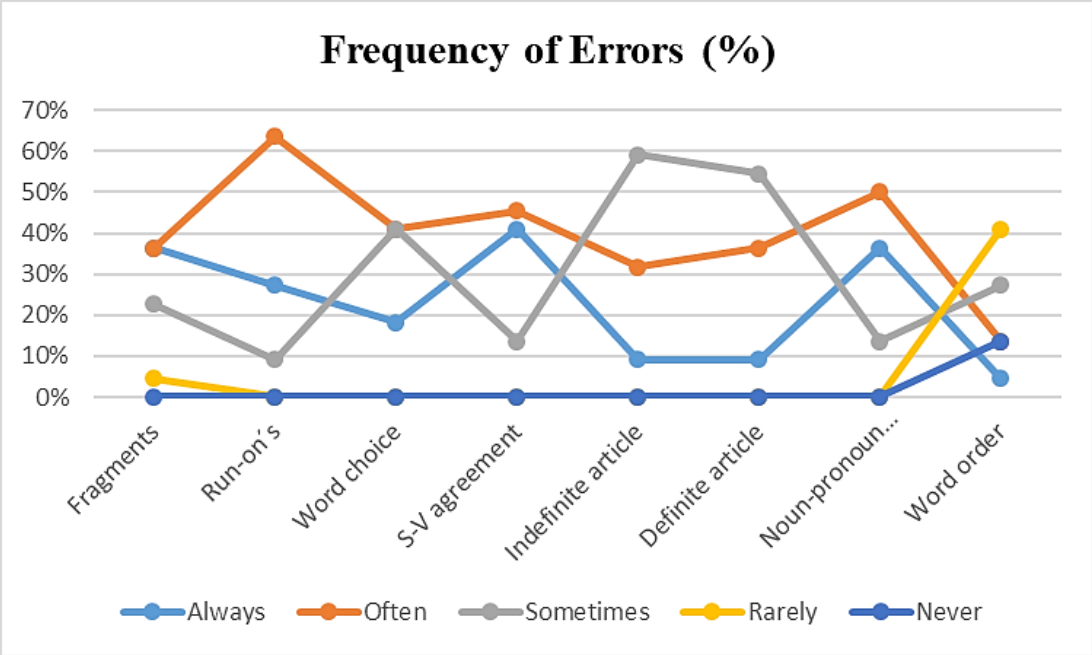

Figure 9: This figure presents the frequency of errors in percentages. The three highest errors are run-on's, S-V agreement, noun-pronoun agreement.

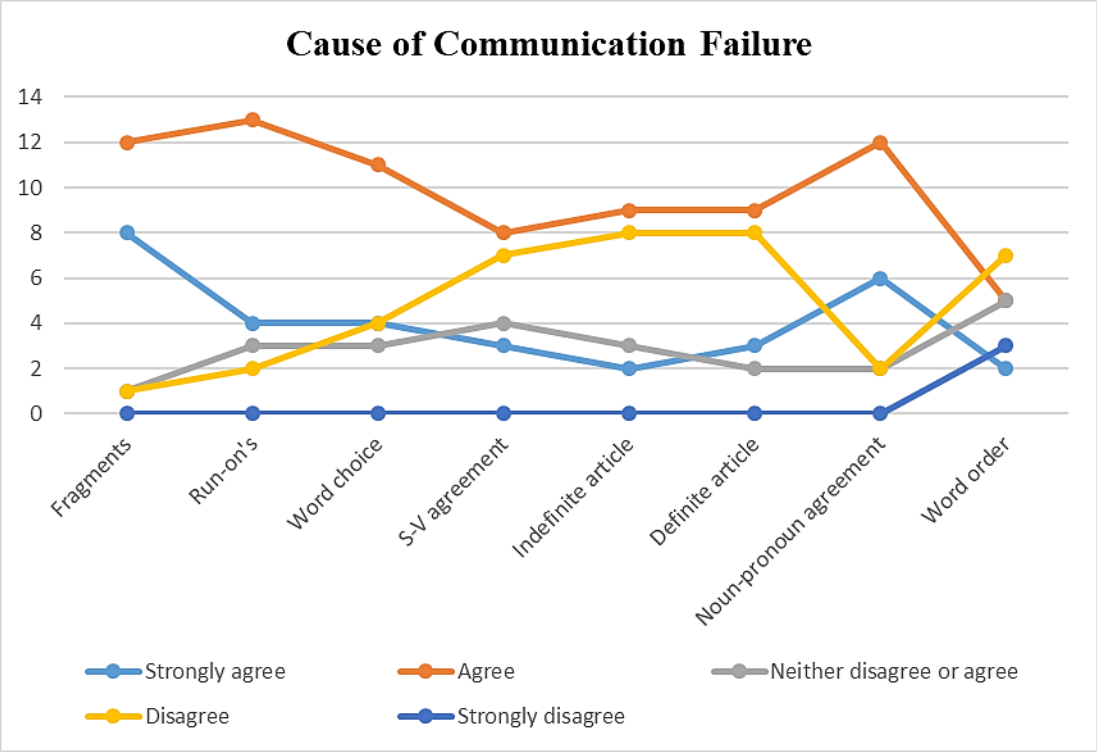

Figure 10: This figure presents the extent to which errors can cause communication failure. Teachers agree on three: run-on's, fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement.

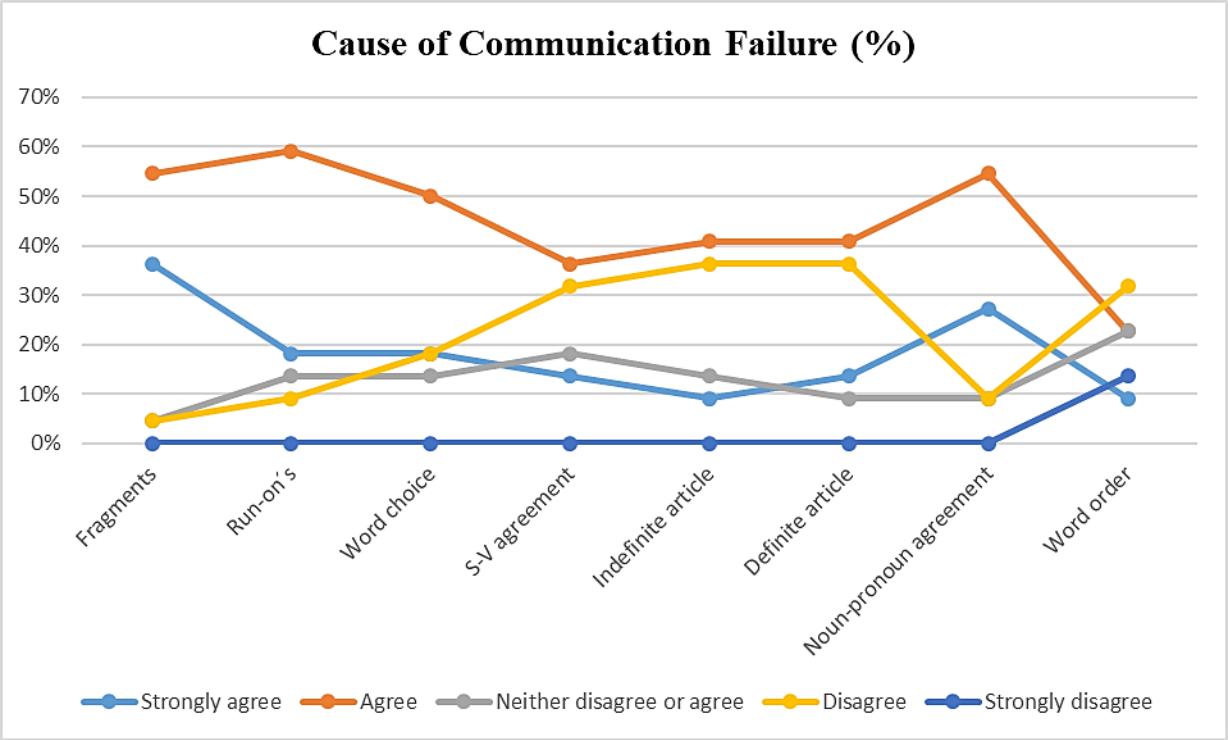

Figure 11: This figure presents the extent to which errors can cause communication failure in percentages. Teachers agree on three: run-on's, fragments, and noun-pronoun agreement.

The first two chosen categories were noun-pronoun agreement and run-on sentences to be part of the study since teachers agreed on the frequency of occurrence and probability to cause communication failure. The third chosen target was sentence fragments because of the following reasons. First, the categories of Always and Often were considered. In this respect, S-V agreement had 41% and 45%, respectively, and Fragments had 36% in both categories; consequently, S-V agreement errors were found more frequently than Fragments. The next question of the survey was to what extent the errors can cause communication failure, and teachers answered as follows: 14% strongly agreed and 36% agreed that S-V agreement could cause failure, whereas 36% strongly agreed and 55% agreed that Fragments could be responsible for communication failure. Additionally, 32% disagreed that S-V agreement may cause failure, whereas 5% disagreed that Fragments may cause failure. As a result, it was decided that Fragments should be part of the study because, although they were reportedly less frequent than S-V agreement, they were deemed as highly probable to cause communication failure. Furthermore, since this study's focus was on the effects of direct focused and indirect focused feedback on grammatical accuracy enhancement to avoid communication failure, sentence fragments were selected to be the last target in the study.

APPENDIX F: Consent form

Formulario de Participación Voluntaria

Nombre del estudio: Técnicas de aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés como Lengua Extranjera.

Investigador: Jorge Villavicencio R. **E-mail:** jorgevillavicencioreinoso@gmail.com

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la técnica de retroalimentación en el campo de un idioma extranjero. Es de su completa decisión aceptar el ser parte del estudio o no. Después de haber aceptado, usted tendrá la opción de abandonar hasta antes del análisis de datos recolectados. Es importante recalcar que usted no será afectado de ninguna forma por el estudio y sus resultados; al contrario, su participación supone una valiosa contribución para la academia y futuras técnicas de enseñanza del Inglés como lengua extranjera.

El estudio comprende la aplicación de técnicas de enseñanza en el Inglés y el impacto de las mismas en el dominio de la lengua. Se busca aplicar estrategias que promueven el trabajo en equipo y el progreso estudiantil. El tratamiento del estudio durará 32 horas clase en las cuales usted desarrollará actividades académicas las cuales serán analizadas para obtener medidas y sacar conclusiones. Todo resultado obtenido del estudio o tareas, no será incluido en su promedio de calificaciones.

Toda la información del estudio será de absoluta confidencialidad, así como resultados individuales de los participantes. Usted será asignado un número el cual solo usted y el docente tendrán conocimiento, y en caso de publicación del estudio como artículo académico, su identidad no será revelada por ningún concepto. Finalmente, es importante recalcar que usted no pagará por ser parte estudio ni recibirá un pago por lo mismo.

Su participación es estrictamente voluntaria y si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, puede contactarme a través del correo electrónico o en persona.

Yo, Jorge Villavicencio R., he cumplido con informar de manera completa sobre el estudio al estudiante. He discutido las actividades a realizarse, procedimientos, confidencialidad y he respondido a todas las inquietudes.

Investigador: _____ Date: _____

Firma: _____ C.I. _____

Estudiante,

He leído toda la información incluida en este consentimiento escrito. Todas mis dudas fueron respondidas satisfactoriamente. De manera voluntaria, acuerdo participar en este estudio.

Estudiante: _____ Date: _____

Firma: _____ C.I. _____

APPENDIX G: American English in Mind Placement Test

American English in Mind

placement test

Written test

- Choose the best answer for each question.
- Stop when the questions become too difficult.
- Spend no more than 40 minutes on the test.

1 Hi! How _____?
I'm fine, thanks.
A you B are you C you are

2 My father _____ a teacher. He's a doctor.
A isn't B aren't C am not

3 _____ this in English?
It's an apple.
A Who's B Where's C What's

4 I _____ that CD. It's awful.
A do like B like C don't like

5 _____ play soccer after school?
A Do you B You C You do

6 I have two brothers. _____ names are Jonathan and William.
A Our B Their C His

7 There aren't _____ concerts in our town this month.
A the B some C any

PHOTOCOPIABLE © Cambridge University Press 2012 American English in Mind Placement test Written test 1

8 The bookstore is _____ the right, across from the movie theater.
A in B on C at

9 _____ a new bicycle?
A You have B Has you C Do you have

10 _____ you like some soup?
Yes, please.
A Would B Are C Do

11 I _____ watch TV in my room because I don't have a TV.
A hardly ever B never C sometimes

12 Do you _____ video games?
A playing B like play C like playing

13 Miguel _____ a movie in the living room right now.
A watches B is watch C is watching

14 Shakespeare _____ more than 30 plays during his life.
A writes B wrote C writing

15 Mr White's birthday is _____ September.
A in B on C at

16 Where _____ you at 2:00 today?
I was in the library.
A was B were C weren't

17 _____ you see your friends yesterday?
A Did B Were C Had

18 We _____ tennis last night because it rained.
A didn't play B don't play C didn't played

19 I'm OK at math, but Luca is _____ than me.
A good B better C gooder

20 That is _____ computer.
A a expensive B an expensive C expensive

21 My friends and I all enjoy _____ TV.
A to watch B watch C watching

22 John isn't at home today. He _____ with his cousin for a week.
A is staying B stays C stay

23 We _____ at the beach yesterday because it rained all day.
A wasn't B didn't C weren't

24 I'm too warm. I'm going to _____ my coat.
A pick up B take off C put on

PHOTOCOPIABLE © Cambridge University Press 2012 American English in Mind Placement test Written test 2

25 I'm sorry I lost your pen.
_____ I don't really need it.
A I don't think so. B Where's my pen? C No problem!

26 I arrived in France on Saturday. It's Tuesday now. I arrived _____.
A before three days B for three days C three days ago

27 My brother's on vacation now, so he _____ to go to work.
A haven't B doesn't have C hasn't

28 I'd like to be _____ when I'm older. I like animals.
A a vet B an engineer C an architect

29 I like to _____ all my allowance and then buy myself something special.
A earn B waste C save

30 I'd like to have _____ fruit after my lunch.
A a B some C an

31 Saturday is the _____ day of the week to go to the mall. It's busy!
A bad B worse C worst

32 My sister _____ for Mexico on Saturday.
A is leaving B leaving C is leave

33 Joe doesn't feel well. I don't think he _____ go to the concert tonight.
A won't B will C willn't

34 I always play my favorite rock music very _____.
A loud B loudly C louder

35 The sky looks dark. _____ rain?
A Is it going to B Is it going C It's going to

36 If I _____ my homework soon, I'll go out.
A finishing B finish C will finish

37 You _____ go to school if you don't feel well.
A shouldn't B haven't C should

38 My friend Jane is a very _____ person. She always smiles a lot!
A organized B honest C happy

39 _____ you ever been to Africa?
A Were B Have C Did

40 My brother loves cooking, but he _____ does the dishes – I do it for him!
A always B usually C never

41 When I saw Jack yesterday, he _____ for a bus.
A waited B was waiting C has waited

42 John isn't _____ his sister.
A old than B as older than C as old as

43 James always studies _____ me.
A harder than B more hard than C more hardly than

44 _____ we don't leave soon, we'll miss the train.
A Unless B If C When

45 It's important to _____ our plastic bottles if possible.
A waste B pollute C recycle

46 John lives in Spain, _____ ?
A isn't he B doesn't he C hasn't he

47 We've _____ seen that film. We saw it last month.
A already B just C yet

48 Our letters _____ every morning.
A is delivered B deliver C are delivered

49 My English teacher doesn't _____ eat in the classroom.
A letting us B let us to C let us

50 You have a nice house. _____ there for a long time?
A Have you lived B Do you live C Did you live

51 Jake always brings _____ big apple to school for his snack every day.
A an B the C a

52 I _____ some money for my birthday last week.
A was gave B was given C am given

53 I don't like that website. There aren't _____ pictures on it.
A too much B enough C too many

54 I'm hungry.
OK, _____ a sandwich.
A I'm going to make you B I'm making you C I'll make you

55 My friends and I can't go into town today because _____ is busy.
A everyone B anyone C someone

56 You look tired!
Yes, I _____ all morning.
A am cooking B have cooked C have been cooking

57 _____ to play baseball when you were younger?
A Used you B Did you use C Do you used

58 If I _____ a lot of money, I'd buy a new computer.
A had B would have C did have

59 When I got home yesterday, my mom wasn't there. She _____ gone out.
A has B was C had

60 We would have won the game if Anna _____ her leg.
A hadn't broken B wouldn't have broken C didn't break

61 When my brother comes home, I'll _____ him my good news.
A speak B say C tell

62 Maria _____ to several countries in Europe since she left school.
A travels B has traveled C traveled

63 I _____ to Rio de Janeiro in my life.
A have never been B never went C never have been

64 How long _____ that book?
A have you read B do you read C have you been reading

65 It's late. _____ to go to bed.
A You'd better B You ought C You should

66 The traffic is bad, so Simon _____ arrive on time.
A might not B won't probably C isn't likely

67 I'm going to call my friend Jackie _____ I get home.
A if B as soon as C unless

68 I can't go out tonight. I have to review _____ an exam tomorrow.
A with B about C for

69 This magazine is free. That means you _____ pay for it.
A don't have to B mustn't C have to

70 If my dad wants to _____, he goes to the nearest garage.
A have his car fixed B fix his car C have fixed his car

71 Please stop _____ so much noise. I'm trying to do my homework!
A make B to make C making

72 If I _____ enough money, I'd probably go away for the weekend.
A have B had C will have

73 _____ it was raining, Ben still went to play soccer.
A However B Despite C Although

74 Peter _____ be home. All the lights are off in his house.
A must B can't C mustn't

75 "Shall I get you a hot chocolate?" said Jamie.
Jamie _____ to get me a hot chocolate.
A offered B invited C suggested

76 My brother is always telling me what to do. He's really _____.
A considerate B bossy C bad-tempered

77 I got a low score on the test. I _____ studied last weekend.
A should have B should C shouldn't have

78 We missed the bus again. If only we _____ left two minutes earlier.
A should B have C had

79 He's _____ best guitarist I've ever heard.
A a B an C the

80 She grew up in Quebec, so she's used to _____ French.
A speak B speaking C speaks

81 I don't think we _____ have given Jon that present. He clearly didn't like it.
A might B should C would D can

82 A sports champion is someone _____ level of physical fitness is very high.
A who B where C whose D which

83 I was quite happy when my soccer team _____ with the other team. At least they didn't lose!
A scored B beat C won D tied

84 It's important _____ something you're really interested in.
A to study B study C studying D studied

85 Tim set off early to his class because he wanted to _____ getting there. He hates hurrying!
A take his time B waste time C be in time D run out of time

86 One of my classmates is quite _____. She never checks anything and she often makes mistakes.
A charming B pushy C careless D hypocritical

87 I hope you remembered _____ the door before you left the house.
A lock B to lock C locking D locked

88 "I can't wait for the weekend!" said John.
John told me _____ for the weekend.
A he can't wait B I can't wait C he waited D he couldn't wait

89 "It definitely wasn't me that broke the window!" said Robert.
Robert _____ that he had broken the window.
A refused B claimed C suggested D denied

90 When I was a child, I _____ spend a lot of time playing with my toys.
A would B did C used D had

91 I think Tomas dropped the vase _____ purpose. He's always hated it!
A by B with C on D in

92 I went for a run last night, so I'm feeling tired today.
If I _____ for a run last night, I wouldn't be feeling tired today.
A wouldn't have gone B didn't go C wouldn't go D hadn't gone

93 Some scientists are worried that by 2050, temperatures on Earth _____ by 2 degrees C.
A will be rising B will have risen C have risen D will rise

94 It's time I got rid _____ all the old magazines in my bedroom.
A from B off C of D with

95 Unfortunately, when my mom went to the garage to get her car, she discovered it _____.
A still hadn't been repaired B was still repairing C had already been repaired D hadn't repaired yet

96 I think we'll have good weather for our vacation next week, _____?
A don't I B haven't we C won't we D won't it

97 Traveling by plane can be very quick, _____, it can be less comfortable than traveling by car.
A Moreover B On the other hand C In addition D Finally

98 This writer's first book was fantastic, but the second one is really disappointing. It's _____ as good as the first.
A just B nowhere near C almost D even

99 Our train leaves early tomorrow, so we'll _____ for the station at 7:00 am.
A get off B take off C drive off D set off

100 English _____ to be a difficult language to spell.
A is said B says C has said D said

APPENDIX H: Sample of a Writing Topic

Writing Task: Generational Gaps
Word count: 180 words

Read an email from one of your friends. Reply to the email below.

From:	Your friend
To:	You
	Hello, I hope you're doing fine. You know, my Social Studies teacher asked me to find out differences and similarities between this generation and my parents/grandparents' generation. Honestly, I can't think of any, so I'd like you to tell me some you may have in mind. I'd be more than thankful. By the way, I'm visiting you next week, and I have a nice present for you! I'll be waiting for your reply. Hugs, Your friend.

APPENDIX I: Tally Sheets of the Pre-test and Post-test

INDIRECT FEEDBACK

	Run-on sentence		Noun-pronoun agreement		Fragments	
Participant	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1	3	0	0	0	2	0
2	6	2	1	0	1	1
3	5	0	1	0	1	0
4	5	0	0	0	1	1
5	6	4	0	0	0	0
6	3	0	0	0	4	0
7	8	2	0	0	1	2
8	5	6	0	0	3	0
9	8	1	0	0	2	2
10	5	7	1	1	0	0
11	3	3	1	0	0	0
12	5	3	0	2	0	0
13	5	1	0	1	2	0
14	7	4	2	0	1	0
15	2	4	0	0	6	1
16	5	1	0	0	1	0
17	5	2	0	1	0	0
18	5	0	2	0	1	0
19	7	4	1	1	1	2
20	3	1	0	0	4	0
	101	45	9	6	31	9

DIRECT FEEDBACK

	Run-on sentence		Noun-pronoun agreement		Fragments	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1	3	0	2	0	5	0
2	6	1	0	0	3	0
3	12	3	0	0	3	0
4	4	3	0	0	1	1
5	1	1	2	0	0	3
6	6	3	0	0	0	0
7	8	3	0	1	6	3
8	2	5	0	0	3	1
9	7	3	1	0	2	2
10	4	0		0	4	4
11	7	1		0	3	3
12	4	4	0	0	4	0
13	5	1	3	0	1	1
14	5	3	0	0	0	0
15	4	2	0	0		0
16	9	2	2	0	3	0
17	3	2	0	0	1	0
18	1	3	0	0	0	0
19	6	3	0	1	1	1
	97	43	10	2	40	19

	NO FEEDBACK								
	Run-on sentence			Noun-pronoun agreement			Fragments		
	Pre-test		Post-test	Pre-test		Post-test	Pre-test		Post-test
1	6		6	0		0	6		6
2	6		4	0		0	2		3
3	5		3	0		0	1		1
4	5		3	0		0	0		0
5	3		3	0		2	1		2
6	6		1	0		0	0		0
7	3		3	0		0	1		1
8	5		6	0		0	4		2
9	4		8	0		0	3		0
10	6		4	1		0	0		2
11	4		4	0		0	0		0
12	4		6	0		0	1		4
13	3		3	0		0	0		1
14	5		7	0		0	2		2
15	7		5	0		0	2		2
16	6		2	2		0	0		1
17	7		1	0		0	1		3
18	5		3	2		0	1		4
19	6		4	0		0	2		1
	96		76	5		2	27		35